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OR,

Texas Jack's Bravos.

A Romance of the Pard Rivals on
the Texas Border.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

THE CADET PARDS.

Two cadets of the Military Academy were lying idly upon the banks of the Hudson one pleasant afternoon late in March, and were watching with some interest a pretty little yacht which had put out from a country seat upon the shore opposite West Point.

"The man who holds the tiller of yonder craft, Godfrey, is not an expert sailor, for see he does not seem to take notice of the wind-shifts and squalls."

"No, he is very reckless, and with ladies in the yacht, too—see, they are coming across the

"HOLD PARD! DON'T MAKE US USE LEAD AS WELL AS ROPE!" CRIED TEXAS JACK
ADVANCING TOWARD THE ENTRAPPED BUFFALO BILL.

river, Cecil," answered Godfrey Granger, a dashing, handsome cadet of twenty-one, who was serving his last year at West Point, as was also his fellow cadet, Cecil Seldon, the one who all admitted would carry off the first honors of his class, his rival being his best friend, Granger.

Both were Southern boys, and from the same State, the plantations of their parents adjoining, so that from earliest boyhood they had been the best of friends.

The little yacht stood steadily on toward the West Point shore, careening far over at times, when a hard puff of wind would strike her, for the wind was fickle and decidedly squally.

Suddenly an exclamation of alarm broke from the lips of both cadets, and Cecil Seldon in an instant was clambering down the steep bank toward the river, while he called out:

"Run to the landing for a boat, Godfrey!"

The yacht had capsized under pressure of one of the heavy flaws, and its occupants were struggling in the water some hundred yards from the shore.

From a rock overhanging the river, and thirty feet in height, had Cecil Seldon leaped into the water head-first, and the impetus thus gained sent him far on his way ere he arose to the surface.

With powerful strokes, for he was a superb swimmer, he went to the rescue, and, just as a young girl, who had been unable to reach the upturned boat, was disappearing for the last time, he grasped her about the waist and said, reassuringly:

"Do not be alarmed, miss, for we will soon reach the boat."

She saw his brave, handsome face, felt his strong grasp, and had no further fear, yielding herself to him with perfect confidence in his power to save her.

As he reached the upturned yacht a gentleman, whose strength had failed him, released his hold and disappeared.

"Oh, sir, my father has sunk, but you can save him," cried the rescued girl to Cecil Seldon.

"Hold hard to the boat, miss, and I will try."

"Help is coming, yonder, so cheer up all of you," was the response, and having seen that the maiden held firm to the yacht's side, he dove deep after the sunken man.

It seemed an age ere he came to the surface again; but when he did he brought with him the one he had sought to save.

"Bravo, Cecil, you have done well," cried Godfrey Granger, who just then came up in a boat, and ran alongside the yacht.

With aid at hand the party were quickly in the boat, two maidens, the gentleman whom Cecil Seldon had saved and a young man.

"Pull us to the other shore, for yonder is my home," said the young man, in a peremptory tone.

But Cecil Seldon quickly responded:

"No, sir, for this gentleman is unconscious, and needs prompt attention, which the surgeon of the Academy will give him."

"Yes, my father has been ill, sir, for weeks, and I thank you."

"But are you sure that he is not dead?" said the young girl whom the gallant young cadet had rescued.

"Oh, no, miss, he'll soon come round all right."

"Shall I aid you, Godfrey?"

"No, indeed, we will soon land."

"So, men, run for the surgeon," called out Cecil Seldon, hailing a group of cadets upon the shore, and two of them started off at full speed to obey, while one of the crowd shouted:

"Three cheers for Cadet Captain Cecil Seldon!"

The cheer was given with a will, and a few minutes after the boat landed, and the unconscious man was lifted in kindly arms and borne ashore just as the surgeon, who happened to be near, arrived.

As the gentleman proved to be an army officer on sick leave, rowing across the river to call upon the commandant, he was carried to the latter's quarters, the others following, while Cecil Seldon hastened to his quarters to change his wet uniform for a dry one.

An hour after he was sent for to report at the commandant's quarters, where he was presented to the party he had so gallantly rescued, for neither of the gentlemen could swim, and but for the prompt aid rendered all might have been lost.

"I did but half the work, sir, for Cadet Granger had a share in the rescue," was the modest reply of the young cadet captain, and his praise of his comrade at once caused the commandant to send for the other gallant cadet and present him also to Major Louis Layton and his party who owed their lives to the daring young soldiers.

CHAPTER II.

THE CADETS' VISIT.

ALTHOUGH it was through the words of Cecil Seldon that Godfrey Granger was honored for the part he played in the rescue of Major Layton and his party, it seemed that from that mo-

ment a certain feeling, never known before, came between the two cadet parads.

Certainly not by Cecil Seldon was it shown, but by Godfrey Granger, though why the coolness upon his part toward his lifelong friend he did not make known.

Major Layton was on sick leave, having been severely wounded in an engagement some time before on the frontier, and this was followed by an attack of fever.

A gallant officer, a genial gentleman and a man of wealth, he was popular with all who knew him, and while on a visit with his daughter to an old friend living upon the Hudson, had taken advantage of the balmy spring afternoon to sail over to West Point and see the commandant who was colonel of his regiment.

Eugene Enders the son of the gentleman whom they were visiting offered to sail them over, though his sister Ethel had urged against it, as she said that her brother was a very indifferent sailor.

Not wishing to hurt the feelings of the young man the major had gone with him, and the result is already known to the reader, for had Eugene Enders been a good sailor no accident could have happened in the comparatively light breeze that was blowing.

Of course the amateur seaman had excuses for the mishap, such as the catching of the sheet rope and all that, but that he had capsized the yacht he could not deny, and fretting under this he was compelled to admit that Louise Layton, whom he madly loved, was saved by a cadet, and West Point cadets he affected to despise.

Nay more, he could not swim himself, and but for Cecil Seldon giving him a helping hand, along also with his sister, and placing them where they could the better cling to the boat, both of them would have let go their hold and drowned beyond doubt.

The major and those with him were taken across the river to the Enders elegant home that evening, but the beautiful face of Louise Layton haunted the young rescuer from the moment that he had looked into it as she clung to him to save her from death.

The next day, as an honor due the cadet captain, the commandant sent Cecil Seldon across the river to ask regarding the health of Major Layton and the young ladies, about whom he felt some anxiety.

Taking a sail-boat the young cadet ran across the river, handling the boat with consummate skill, though a stiff gale was blowing, lashing the Hudson into large, white-capped waves.

Standing in the boat-house, watching his coming, was Louise Layton, who had gone out alone for a walk.

"That man handles a boat well in my humble opinion," she said to herself, and then added:

"Why, he is coming here, and, as I live, it is that handsome cadet, my hero."

She was a beautiful girl, with a soulful face and exquisite form, though she could hardly have reached her eighteenth birthday.

Her face flushed as she recognized the single occupant of the boat, and as he brought his bow round and ran gracefully up to the dock, she called out:

"Well done, for a soldier, sir."

"I should have thought that you would have preferred the navy to the army."

"I did, Miss Layton, but my mother is an invalid and did not wish me to have to go on long cruises, so we compromised on the army."

"A dutiful son you are to yield to your mother's wish for your future career; but let me now thank you, Mr. Seldon, for the life you saved, as well I know what I owe you—yes, my father and the others as well, and yesterday I could not tell you all the gratitude that was in my heart."

"Pray do not give credit where none is due, Miss Layton, for could any man but a coward stand and see you drown before his eyes?"

"But I am under orders, so let me tell you that the commandant sent me over to inquire after the health of your father, and all of you, after your ducking in the icy waters yesterday."

"Come to the mansion, sir, and see, that you may report correctly," and Louise led the way up the winding path leading to Villa Enders.

CHAPTER III.

IN HONOR BOUND.

"Now you must not think, Mr. Seldon, that I saw you coming and went down to the boat-house to meet you, for I did not," said Louise, with a wicked smile as they walked along together.

"Why should I think what is not so, Miss Layton?"

"Well, I learn that all West Point cadets are so conceited, you know."

"Perhaps we are, Miss Layton, and yet I would not wish to be overwhelmed with conceit."

"I do not believe that you are, for a conceited man is a selfish one, and you showed utter unselfishness in coming to our rescue at great risk to yourself."

"I ran no risk though."

"Oh yes, you did, for this is March and the water is icy; in fact we were so benumbed with cold we could not have held on much longer to the boat."

"I hope none of you have suffered from the effects?"

"No, though father has kept his room since."

"He will be glad to see you indeed, as in fact will all of the others," and Louise led the visitor into the library, where the household were gathered.

It was a pleasant half hour that Cecil Seldon spent at Villa Enders, and when he departed he had as an escort down to his boat the two young ladies, as well as Eugene Enders.

The latter was a young man of twenty-five, and his face showed that he led a wild life, for his father allowed him a very large income to live upon.

"It is blowing a gale, Mr. Seldon, much harder than when you came over, and I really fear to see you start back," said Louise Layton, with anxious look and tone.

"Oh, no, Miss Layton, there is no danger."

"Will you not remain all night, sir?" asked Ethel, and she meant it, though her brother did not when he added:

"Yes, Seldon, you had better stay."

"Thank you, no, for I am compelled to return to-night, for I expect to leave West Point to-morrow."

"Expect to leave West Point, sir?" asked Louise, with amazement.

"Yes, Miss Layton, I shall offer my resignation to-night to the commandant."

"Offer your resignation, when the commandant told Major Layton that you stood highest in your class, and would surely carry off all the honors?" Ethel Enders remarked.

The face of the young cadet flushed, and, after an instant of hesitation, he replied:

"You may not know that I am a Southerner, Miss Enders?"

"And wherein on that account, Mr. Seldon, is your reason for leaving West Point?"

"My education, I suppose, Miss Enders, for, though I am in the Military Academy of the United States, I was sent here from my State, Tennessee, and there lie the ashes of generations of my ancestors, there dwell my parents and my kindred, so I cannot turn my face toward them as a soldier fighting against them, and we are upon the eve of a civil war, one that will be long and cruel, for I know the temper of my people as well as those of the North, and the struggle will be a desperate one."

"When it comes I will be no traitor to my own flesh and blood, the land of my birth."

"Well said, Mr. Seldon, though I hope that this war can be averted," remarked Louise Layton, in a low tone.

"Heaven grant it, though I fear the worst."

"Still, feeling as I do I cannot longer, with honor, remain in the Military Academy of the United States, and now I bid you farewell."

Eugene Enders had no word pro or con, and a light came into his eyes, as of triumph, when he remarked:

"Well, Seldon, I will say good-by, though I cannot wish you success as I am a Northern man."

"Still I wish you well, after what you did for us yesterday."

"Thank you, Mr. Enders," was the brief reply of the cadet, and turning he grasped the outstretched hand of Ethel Enders who said warmly:

"But I do wish you every success in life, Mr. Seldon."

The cadet bowed and turned to Louise Layton.

She took his hand in both her own and there was a quiver in her voice as she said:

"You saved my life, Mr. Seldon, and I shall pray that in the dangers you will face Heaven may protect you through all. Good-by."

He raised his cap with a low bow, sprang into his boat, cast off and went driving away into the wild waters in the gloom of approaching night.

"The fellow is a fool," said Eugene Enders gazing after him.

"No, he is a good sailor, you know, brother."

"I do not mean that he is a fool to go across the river, but to leave the army with the honors of his class in his grasp," answered Eugene Enders, who did not relish the dig his sister gave him about his lack of seamanship.

"It is my opinion that it is because he is an honorable man that he leaves West Point, feeling that, with his views, it would be dishonorable for him to remain," said Louise Layton.

And the three stood there watching the little boat until it was lost to sight in the gloom and distance.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PARTING OF THE PARADS.

THOUGH Cecil Seldon sent in his resignation as he had said he would, it was not accepted.

The commandant sent for him and told him frankly that it would be well for him to remain at the Academy until war between the North and the South was assured.

"If it does come, Cadet Seldon, and you then deem it your duty to leave West Point, I shall accept your resignation at once; but I

trust that the dread evil of a civil struggle may be averted, and until its coming is a certainty, I shall urge you to remain here.

Under these circumstances Cecil Seldon consented to remain, and two nights after met Louise and Ethel at a ball at the Academy, for they had come there under the escort of Eugene Enders.

It may have been that he was the best dancer in the cadet corps, perhaps that he was a captain; but certain it was Louise Layton found Cecil Seldon's name filling up two-thirds of her list of dances, greatly to the annoyance of Godfrey Granger and Eugene Enders.

"Never mind; he will not rival me long," muttered Eugene Enders as he turned away from Louise, who had just expressed regrets, as she was engaged for that waltz to Cadet Captain Seldon.

"May I have the pleasure of this waltz, Miss Layton?" asked Cadet Lieutenant Godfrey Granger a short while after, going up to Louise, who was the acknowledged beauty and belle of the ball.

"I am sorry, Lieutenant Granger, but I have promised the time of the waltz for a promenade with Captain Seldon."

"I would give half my life to have saved you as did Cecil Seldon," almost fiercely said the cadet lieutenant.

Louise looked surprised, but quickly said: "Why, did you not also save us? Are you not our gallant rescuer as well as he?"

"Not for he did the rescuing, and I was of little use; but do you know that he is going South when war breaks out?"

"So he told me."

"He is a fool to do so, for no man has the promise of a more brilliant future than he, should he remain."

"He appears to feel it is duty—that he is in honor bound to go with his State."

"Fiddlesticks! His duty is to his whole country."

"That is my view, also, yet opinions differ, and he is governed by his sense of duty, I firmly believe; but you are from the same State as Cadet Captain Seldon, are you not?"

"I am, and I shall remain here."

"I admire you for doing so, if you act from a sense of duty, also, Lieutenant Granger; but, pardon me now, for there comes Captain Seldon after me."

As he approached Cecil Seldon bowed pleasantly to his friend and said:

"In the best of company, I see, Godfrey."

The cadet lieutenant bowed in silence and walked away, while Cecil Seldon remarked:

"I wish I knew what ails Granger, for he has not been himself the past few days, acting coldly toward me."

"Perhaps he feels your intention in going South in case of war?"

"I cannot understand why he does not do the same."

"It will be a bitter blow for his mother and father, if he does not; but, he knows best."

And after that meeting between Louise Layton and Cecil Seldon there were many more, for there were a couple of dances at the hotel, one at Villa Enders and several at the Academy, and at each one it seemed that the young Southerner and the Northern maiden were more devoted than ever to each other.

At last the tocsin of war was sounded by the South firing upon Sumter, and at once, upon the eve of gaining his honors and becoming a soldier of the Blue, Cecil Seldon resigned his cadetship, bade farewell to his comrades and started Southward.

His parting with his old boyhood pard was a strange one.

Of late Godfrey Granger had persistently avoided him; but before leaving Cecil Seldon had gone to the room of his friend and extending his hand said:

"Godfrey, I have come to say good-by, and to ask you if there is any word you would send your people?"

"Thank you, I have the mails left to me yet, though I suppose that will soon end through the suicidal acts of the Southern hotheads," was the cold reply.

"We will not discuss the rights and wrongs of the question, Godfrey; for we see them with different views; but I would ask you in what way I have offended, and why you appear angry with me?"

"It was but a jealous whim, old fellow, because you, not I, saved that beautiful girl, Louise Layton, and got all the honors."

"Forget it, and success attend you—good-by."

Thus, with a warm grasp of the hand these two parted—to meet again; when, and under what circumstances the sequel will show.

CHAPTER V.

"UNTIL DEATH US DO PART."

MAJOR LAYTON, feeling none the worse for his drenching and narrow escape from drowning, after a few weeks' visit at Villa Enders returned to his own handsome home in New York, leaving Louise still the guest of Ethel Enders.

Two days before the departure of Cadet

Seldon from West Point, Louise suddenly decided to return home, yet just why her fair hostess could not understand.

The truth was that the evening before she had refused the heart and hand of Eugene Enders, evidently to that young gentleman's deep mortification, surprise and chagrin.

In fact Eugene Enders became furious at her refusal and said:

"Had I offered you my love two months ago you would have accepted me, for I know that you loved me then."

"But you met that Rebel Cadet, Seldon, who dragged you out of the water, and since then you have changed, having no eyes or ears for any one else."

"Well, he will join his brother Rebels of the South and he hanged as a traitor before three months have gone by, and then perhaps you will once more listen to me."

"Had such been my motive, Mr. Enders, you may be certain now that your tirade, just uttered, would keep me from making so false a step in life as to accept the offer you have honored me with."

"I do not love you, I never did, even though your conceit appears to have led you into that erroneous belief, and the man I marry, if ever I do marry, I must love with all my heart and soul, and you are not one to win my respect, admiration and regard."

With a bitter oath, which revealed the cloven foot in his nature, the young man turned away and it was the next morning that Louise took her departure from Villa Enders.

As Ethel Enders bade her farewell at the boat she mused to herself:

"I almost begin to feel hatred creeping into my heart for Louise Layton, for I feel that she loves Cecil Seldon, and I fear that he is wrapped up in her."

"Well, he goes South and I would rather see him fall in battle than call another than myself his wife."

"With him out of the way brother Eugene must win her, and if he does not, then Godfrey Granger shall, for he loves her with his whole soul, as I can plainly see."

"Well, she shall never marry Cecil Seldon, war or no war, and I make no idle threat, for my love shall not be thwarted," and the light that flashed in the eyes of Ethel Enders, the expression that came upon her face, marred its beauty, revealing indeed that she could become a very dangerous foe if driven to it.

And down to New York went the young cadet, hastening homeward to cast his lot with the boys in gray.

But his hurry was not so great that he could not tarry in the city long enough to make a visit upon Louise Layton.

He found the city a scene of intense excitement, for the tocsin had resounded through the land, calling the patriots from North, East and West to defend the flag, to save the Union, and right gallantly were they responding to the call.

At the door of the mansion Cecil Seldon met the gallant major just going out.

"Ah, Seldon, my boy, I am glad to see you, but I dread that your being here means that you are going South?"

"It does, sir, for I deem that my duty."

"Then stick to it, my boy, if duty you deem it to be, for thus acting, from your standpoint, you are right."

"I am going out now, for I am more than busy, but dine with us at six, and I will then have time to talk with you."

"Thank you, sir, but I must leave town within the hour, and only stopped over to say good-by to Miss Louise and yourself, who have treated me so kindly."

"Treated you kindly?"

"Great God, boy, what would I be without my child, whose life you saved, yes, and I too would have been at the bottom of the Hudson but for your pluck."

"Good-by, Seldon, and the God of Battles guard you in safety through this war," and wringing the hand of the ex-cadet the major departed, leaving him to go in and see Louise.

She soon appeared, looking pale, yet very beautiful, and received him most cordially.

He took her hand, and what he said to her need not be written here; but her answer may, for it showed the true woman, as she said:

"Cecil, our paths divide to-day, and your land and mine, for the South has seceded now, are foes; but I love you with all my heart and soul, and you have asked for my promise one day to become your wife, to be true to you, and I answer yes, until Death do us part will I be true to you."

Thus they parted, the one pledged to the other until Death should sever their love.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SPY.

THE sounds of war had resounded through the Southern land for many a year. Armies of the North and South had met in battle on many fields, and names that will be imperishable in history were engraven upon the banners of the soldiers wearing both the Blue and the Gray.

Men had become heroes and had won fame immortal, while thousands of graves dotted the land, of those who had fallen.

Into a camp of Confederates one night, in the State of Tennessee, a prisoner was brought by a party of scouts, and the charge against him was a severe one, for he was accused of being a spy of the Union Army.

One of his captors asserted that he recognized the prisoner as an old boyhood friend, who had entered West Point, and, graduating with the honors of his class, had since won distinction as an officer and was a major on the staff of the commanding general.

Knowing the country thereabout from early association, he had ventured, in the disguise of a mountaineer, into the Confederate lines as a spy.

So said his accuser, and he admitted that he was his rival for the love of a young girl attending the same village school in those days, and he had never forgiven him.

The prisoner was a tall, handsome young man, with darkly bronzed face, erect form and was attired in homespun, top-boots and a slouch hat.

He carried a squirrel rifle, a revolver and a bowie-knife, and gave his name as Amos Herne, and said that he had come down from his mountain home to see the soldiers.

"Amos Herne is a scout in the Union Army, and was also a boy with me."

"This is not Amos Herne, but a spy and a traitor, who has come into our lines to get what information he can against us, general," declared his accuser, firmly.

"Whom do you accuse him of being?" asked the general, who was pretty sure in his own mind that the prisoner was a spy, and he kept his eyes fixed upon the face of the man whose life hung by so slender a thread.

"I accuse him of being Godfrey Granger, who got a cadetship at West Point, and, though a Southern man, remained in the United States Army when the war broke out, and he is now a major there."

"When did you see him last?" the general made inquiry.

"Six years ago, before he started for West Point, sir."

"Are you willing to swear that he is Major Godfrey Granger, of the United States Army?"

"I should not hesitate an instant to do so, sir, for I am not mistaken in my man. He should be swung up as a spy."

"That will be his fate, and very quickly, if your charge is true that he is a United States officer come as a spy into our lines," sternly said the general.

The prisoner was perfectly calm, but very pale, for he seemed to realize his danger to its full extent, though there was no braggadocio about him, no defiant manner.

"And you say that you are Amos Herne, a mountaineer, not in the Union Army, nor the one you are accused of being by this scout?" asked the general, fixing his eyes upon the prisoner as he thought he would read his very thoughts.

"I am Amos Herne, sir, a mountaineer," was the response.

"And I'll take oath to the contrary!" was the determined rejoinder of the Confederate scout.

"Well, prisoner, upon this scout's charge I must hold you, and if you are proven to be a spy, you know what your fate will be," said the general.

"Ah! here comes Captain Seldon. He knows Godfrey Granger as well as I do, for he was at West Point with him. Yes, he knows him better than I, for they were cadets together a year ago," assured the scout.

All eyes turned upon the one to whom the scout referred and saw a handsome man splendidly mounted, coming at an easy gallop toward headquarters.

He sat his horse with the easy grace of the perfect rider, wore the uniform of a Confederate captain of cavalry, and looked the dashing, daring commander he was, one who had entered the Confederate service as a private and won his way upward by gallant deeds and distinguished courage upon the field.

The general and all knew him, for he was commandant of a company of mounted minute men, who did service as scouts and rendered most efficient aid to the commander in chief of the army of Tennessee.

It was, in fact, a party of his own men who had brought in the prisoner accused of being a spy.

"He, Captain Seldon, I am glad you have come, for I wish to know if you recognize this prisoner, as upon your reply hangs his life. He is charged by your men with being a spy," said the general as Captain Cecil Seldon rode up to the group.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RECOGNITION.

THERE was a slight start as the eyes of Captain Seldon fell upon the prisoner, but if it was a recognition there was no other sign, and he asked:

"Who is the prisoner, general?"

"He says he is a mountaineer, that his name is Amos Herne, and that he is friendly to the Confederate cause; but he was captured by your men, here, while reconnoitering our works, and this man says that he recognizes him as Major Godfrey Granger, whom you have heard of as a very daring staff officer in the Union Army."

"Yes, captain, is not that man Godfrey Granger, who was our schoolmate as a boy, and who went with you to West Point as a cadet, he having been appointed at large by the President?" said the scout.

Captain Seldon stepped nearer to the prisoner and looked him squarely in the face, while the scout continued:

"He says he is Amos Herne, whom you also remember, sir, but though he looks like him I'll swear that he is Godfrey Granger, a traitor to our side and a spy, for he is a United States officer."

Every one present felt sure that the scout was right, but all awaited the response of Captain Seldon with deepest interest.

"No, Hurley, you are mistaken; this is not Major Godfrey Granger," came the reply at last.

"Are you sure, Captain Seldon?" asked the general.

"Granger was my most intimate boyhood friend, general, and we were four years together as cadets at West Point."

"How long has it been since you last saw him, captain?"

"Just thirteen months, sir."

"And when did you see him last, Scout Hurley?"

"About six years ago, sir."

"And, Captain Seldon, do you recognize him as the mountaineer, Amos Herne?"

"I have not seen Herne, sir, for six years, but he resembles him, strongly."

"I thank you, my old friend Cecil, for you have saved my life," and the prisoner extended his hand, while the general said:

"Hurley, as Captain Seldon was more recently the comrade of Major Granger, and you have not seen him for years, of course he is the best judge as to who the prisoner is; but I am glad to give you credit for being thoroughly on the alert, and doing your duty."

"Mr. Herne, you have made a very narrow escape from death, and unless you intend to enlist in the Confederate Army I would recommend that you return to your mountain home and be more cautious about entering our lines."

"Captain Seldon, as your men brought Herne in, I leave him to your keeping," and the general returned to his quarters, while the horse of the mountaineer, and his arms, having been returned to him, he rode off with Captain Seldon, the latter giving to Hurley an order which sent him and his fellow scouts back on the line.

As the Confederate captain, and the man he had saved from the fate of a spy, rode off alone together, the former said:

"Of course, Granger, you know that I recognized you?"

"It could not be otherwise, I knew, when I saw you coming."

"As my boyhood friend I would not see you put to death, so I uttered the lie I did; but you are here as a spy in our lines, and your comrade, Amos Herne, I shot not two hours ago."

"That there may be no recognition of his body I will send and have it buried by other men than mine; but, let me tell you that ere he died, he confessed to me that he was a spy and had entered the lines as such, with you."

"He also gave me all the papers, maps and reports you both had made, and which he was returning into the Union lines with when I met him, leaving you here to gather other information."

"He saw me coming and fired upon me, but missed his aim, and my bullet went truer and he fell."

"You know this country well, so I will escort you beyond my scouting line, and set you free; then I shall report to the general that I killed a spy and got these papers from him, so that all of our plans can be at once changed."

"I hardly expected this kindness from you, Seldon," said Godfrey Granger in a low tone, for he was visibly moved.

"And why not? Would you not have done as much for me?"

"Oh yes, certainly," and Godfrey Granger seemed little inclined to talk.

At last they reached a spot where Seldon came to a halt and said:

"Now, Godfrey, you have only your own lines to pass through and soon will be safe."

"Do not venture again to play the spy among people who know you so well, and feel so bitter toward you for going into the service against us, for you will be recognized and hanged, if caught again."

"To any of my old comrades who care to know of me, give my regards. Good-by."

"Good-by, Seldon, and again I thank you," and the officer-spy rode away, while hastening back to headquarters Cecil Seldon gave to the general the papers, vastly important, which he had gotten from his boyhood friend whom he had shot, but whom he did not speak of as Amos Herne.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SCOUTING CAPTAINS.

ALONG a mountain trail a band of Federal cavalry were wending their way with caution, for they were leaving their lines to enter those of the Confederate Army.

They were eighteen in number, and at their head rode a man of imposing appearance, for he possessed a tall, sinewy frame, wore his dark-brown hair long, falling almost to his waist, and upon his head was a broad sombrero, such as are worn upon the plains.

He was dressed in buckskin leggings, stuck in high top-boots, a blue hunting-shirt, and a jacket of buckskin, elaborately embroidered and beaded.

About his waist was a belt in which were two revolvers and a bowie-knife, while at his back was slung a Colt's repeating-rifle, such as were in use in the days of the Civil War.

The horseman was splendidly mounted, and his saddle and trappings were of the Mexican pattern, while a lasso hung about the broad horn.

His face was strikingly handsome and fearless, with a look of determination and strongest character in every feature, while it was bronzed as brown as a sailor's from long exposure.

The man thus described was one who had come East with a Kansas regiment of cavalry, as a scout, having won fame upon the Western plains, the prairies and the wilds of the Rocky Mountains as a Pony Express Rider, Overland stage-driver, guide, scout and Indian-fighter, for he was none other than William F. Cody—Buffalo Bill—then really under twenty years of age, yet already famous.

Following him came an officer of cavalry, his shoulder-straps showing the rank of a lieutenant, and behind him rode his men, a dashing band of horsemen known as the Cavalry Scouts. They had won an enviable name under their gallant leader and the scout of the plains, Buffalo Bill.

Coming from an opposite direction to these horsemen, and riding down the mountain path, were a band of Confederates, scouts in gray, numbering twenty-five men.

Suddenly the two commands met in a narrow canyon, when at once viciously rattled carbines and revolvers, with deadly aim, upon both sides.

With a larger force, and perhaps better knowledge of the country, for it was their home, the Confederate Ranger Scouts soon drove the boys in blue into a corner, and their gallant young leader was seen to fall.

But, instantly there dashed to his side the daring plainsman, Buffalo Bill, who was raising him to his own saddle when a bullet brought the horse down. Then, being at the mercy of his foes, the buckskin scout, in frontier style, raised his hands above his head.

"Hold! Let no man fire a shot!" came in a loud, stern voice from the Confederate officer, while Buffalo Bill called back:

"I ask nothing for myself, pard, only for Lieutenant Armes, who is badly wounded I fear, but who can be saved if you will allow me to ride to camp for a surgeon and an ambulance, and then, upon the honor of Buffalo Bill, I will return and give myself up to you as a prisoner."

These manly words were heard by all the Confederates; a cheer from them was the answer, while up to the scout in buckskin rode a horseman, who dismounting quickly said:

"You say that it is Lieutenant Armes who is wounded?"

"Yes, sir, he commands the cavalry scouts."

"Lieutenant George A. Armes?"

"Yes, sir; the same."

"Then mount my own horse and ride with all speed back to your lines for a surgeon and an ambulance, while I see to him. He is a West Point comrade of mine, and our lines are too far away to get aid from there."

"By the Setting Sun, pard, but you are a true man!" cried Buffalo Bill, and with a bound he was in the saddle of the Confederate officer and away at full speed.

In the mean time the Confederate officer had stepped up to the wounded Northern soldier and kneeling by his side said in a kindly tone:

"Armes, my old comrade, do you not know me?"

The eyes opened and met those bent upon him.

"Ah! it is Cecil Seldon!" came in a faint tone.

"Yes, your old cadet comrade, and I am more sorry to see you wounded than I can tell you, but I hope it is not serious."

"It is here," and the hand was placed upon the right side.

The hands of the two comrades of the past had clasped warmly, and now Cecil Seldon set to work to stanch the flow of blood, while he said hopefully:

"It is not a fatal wound, George, old fellow! so cheer up, for you have a constitution and pluck to stand anything."

"Ho, Hurley, bring me a canteen of water, and then draw off the men to the ridge above."

Hurley, the same man who had been the accuser of Godfrey Granger, hurried forward with

the canteen of water, when it was at once placed to the lips of the wounded officer.

"Now, Hurley, draw off our men, carrying the dead and wounded with you, for there are some too badly wounded to ride, I think."

"Yes, sir."

"And await me on the ridge, for when help comes for my old comrade here, I will join you there."

"If you are not captured, sir," was Hurley's significant response.

CHAPTER IX.

A FRIENDLY FOE.

"BETTER let us lie in ambush, captain, to check those fellows, if they try to capture you," suggested the cautious Hurley.

"No, I shall take all chances, Hurley."

"I wouldn't trust 'em, sir."

"I will; so do as I command you."

Hurley shook his head but obeyed reluctantly, for the captain was the idol of his men and they feared for him.

He went back among his men, and found that the half-dozen slain had been gathered together, while the wounded, eight in number, had already been aided to mount their horses and were moving to the rear.

Between two such commands as had met there, the result could not be other than deadly.

The wounded and dead, with two unhurt companions, were sent up to the ridge to the rear, while Hurley, after talking with the others, decided to disobey Captain Seldon's orders and remain to protect him if need came for them to do so.

So they went into ambush in easy range, ready for work in an instant, should there be any treachery toward their loved captain.

The wounded Union officer, meanwhile, had had the flow of blood stanch by his Confederate comrade, who still remained by his side, while the Federal scouts, believing that those in gray were in ambush, held back out of sight, Buffalo Bill having called to them not to advance, and that their lieutenant would be well cared for.

The party had suffered heavily. They had lost half a dozen slain, and as many wounded, and those who were unhurt had to look after those who were bullet-stricken.

"Well, Cecil, we chose different sides in this war, though we were firm pals at the Academy, as Buffalo Bill would call us," remarked the wounded lieutenant, who felt better since the kindly attention of his comrade in gray.

"Yes, we both went as conscience and our sense of duty dictated, George; but that splendid, daring fellow who came to your aid, unmindful of his own life, is Buffalo Bill?"

"Yes, and a more gallant man never lived; but he, too, is wounded."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, though he does not mind a wound that would put other men in the Hospital, and his example is contagious, for mark my words, I do not intend to let this one kill me," and a smile crossed the face of the plucky lieutenant.

"I sincerely hope that it will not, and I believe you will come through all right; but have you seen Godfrey Granger of late?"

"Yes, he is now in our corps. He is walking up rapidly, for he is a brevet major."

"So I have heard; but, you must not talk any more now, George; you must rest."

"Buffalo Bill will soon return, as it is but a couple of miles to our first advance camp."

"Sh! You must keep quiet, for I see that you are suffering."

In a short while the clatter of hoofs was heard and into sight dashed Buffalo Bill, while behind him rode a surgeon.

"Ho, Pard Captain, can the surgeon advance?" called out Buffalo Bill.

"Certainly, for we must here be upon neutral ground," was Cecil Seldon's response.

Young Cody then beckoned to the surgeon and the two came forward together.

The latter saluted the Confederate officer, and then, kneeling by the side of Lieutenant Armes, he said:

"Armes, my poor fellow, I am grieved to see you wounded, but I hope it is not a serious hurt. The ambulance will be along soon, for we rode rapidly; we could not wait its slower movements."

"An old friend, Buffalo Bill tells me?" and the surgeon nodded toward the Confederate officer.

"Yes, and as true as steel. But for his kindness I would have bled to death and Buffalo Bill would have been killed."

In the mean time Buffalo Bill had led the horse of Captain Seldon up to him and said:

"Here is your horse, pard, and a good one he is, too. I have to thank you for lending him to me and allowing me to go after aid for Lieutenant Armes."

"Now, sir, I surrender myself as your prisoner."

"Cody, as you were captured when coming back to carry Lieutenant Armes from the field, at the risk of almost certain death, I shall not hold you as a prisoner, but allow you to go free."

"Pard Captain, do you mean it?" asked the surprised scout.

"Certainly I mean it!"

"Then take Buffalo Bill's word for it that you are as white and square as they make a man, and I'll not forget that I owe it to you that your men did not fill me with lead."

"No, I'll not forget you, captain, and I wish you luck in life if you are ten times a Rebel."

The Confederate officer smiled and grasped Buffalo Bill's outstretched hand just as the ambulance came into view, followed by half a dozen mounted men in blue.

CHAPTER X.

IN DEADLY DANGER.

THE young Confederate officer having given Buffalo Bill the information he was most glad to receive, that he was not to be held a prisoner, turned to the surgeon and said:

"I trust sir, that you find Lieutenant Armes not so seriously wounded as we feared at first."

"The wound is serious enough, though the chances of recovery are all on his side, sir, seeing what a fine constitution is his."

"I am glad to hear this, indeed!" and turning to the wounded officer, Cecil Seldon continued:

"Now, lieutenant, as your ambulance is close at hand, I will take my departure."

"What! you surely do not intend to allow that Rebel officer to escape, Buffalo Bill?" cried the surgeon, hotly.

"No, sir, not to escape, but to depart, for I was his prisoner, as was also Lieutenant Armes. He allows us to go, not we him. You've got the bridle on the wrong end of the horse, Mister Sawbones!" was the young scout's characteristic rejoinder.

"See here, Carrol, you are not here to interfere," sternly reminded Lieutenant Armes, and extending his hand, he continued:

"Do not delay, Cecil, for you may get into trouble. The surgeon does not understand the situation, and those coming may not, either. I owe you my life, and I shall remember it, old friend. Good-by."

"And I owe you also my life and release, sir, and I shall not forget the debt if it comes my way to return it," and Buffalo Bill grasped the hand of the Confederate officer as Lieutenant Armes released it.

"I am glad to have served an old friend, and also you, Cody."

"The circumstances of war make us foes, yet at heart we have no bitterness for each other."

"Good-by!" and without noticing the irate surgeon, Cecil Seldon turned, and mounting his waiting horse, rode away just as the ambulance and its escort drew within easy hail.

But Surgeon Carrol called out excitedly:

"Ho, men! here is a Rebel for you to capture."

"Hold! Let one of you raise a weapon to fire on that Confederate officer and I will kill him!" and Buffalo Bill's revolver covered the four boys in blue who came up with the ambulance for the wounded Union lieutenant.

The Federal soldiers saw but a solitary Confederate officer riding away, they knew not why, and beheld Lieutenant Armes lying wounded upon the ground, with the surgeon standing over him.

They discovered Buffalo Bill confronting them, his revolvers leveled; they heard his threatening words, and quickly came to a halt, the ambulance behind them, drawn by two mules, being reined to a standstill by the driver.

For an instant it was a thrilling tableau, and then it ended by the Confederate officer disappearing from sight around a bend of the path.

The surgeon was at once awed by the act of the young chief of Federal scouts, and heard very distinctly the sternly-uttered words of Lieutenant Armes:

"Surgeon Carrol, if you dare to interfere here, sir, I shall report you to the general. I know what I am about, wounded though I am. Buffalo Bill is right to prevent hostile action against that noble officer, for both of us owe our lives to him."

"Ah, that is a different matter! I did not understand it so," answered Surgeon Carrol, glad to withdraw from his position, and quickly he began arrangements for removing the injured officer from the scene.

The ambulance was turned around and the four cavalymen dismounting, placed the wounded officer comfortably in it, where the surgeon took his seat by the side of his patient and gave orders to the driver to go slow and with the greatest of caution.

Buffalo Bill followed on foot after stripping his horse of his accouterments, and the dead animal of Lieutenant Armes also.

He was joined at once by the scouting party who had escaped, and given a mount soon disappeared from sight.

In the mean time Captain Seldon had ridden on around the bend to suddenly discover Hurley and half a dozen of his men lying in ambush.

They were dismounted, their horses being held back up the path by one of the party, and their rifles covered the escort with the ambulance.

Had the men made an effort to attack, or fire upon their captain, their guns would have quickly spoken and another combat would have been ushered in.

"I told you, Hurley, to return to the ridge and wait for me."

"I couldn't do it, sir, for I feared you would get into trouble, so we sneaked back and took position to protect you."

"Well, I cannot say a word to censure you for disobedience of orders, especially as I very nearly got into trouble, and had no idea help was so near at hand."

"I thank you, men, for your kind care of me," and the young captain rode on up to the ridge, where he placed a picket on duty while he went to report the affair to the general.

CHAPTER XI.

THE VOLUNTEER.

"AH, Captain Seldon, you are the very man I was thinking of," said the general as Cecil Seldon dismounted at headquarters.

"I am glad I came then, general, if you wished me for any service, sir."

"I do, and a most important one; but first tell me what this skirmish was between the lines, for my orderly reports dead and wounded men brought in?"

"I came to make my report, sir," and the young officer at once made known what had occurred over in the valley.

"You did not capture either Lieutenant Armes, or the scout Buffalo Bill?"

"I did not, sir, for I felt under the circumstances that I could not do so."

"That is where the chivalry in your nature gets the best of your discretion; but I will overlook the apparent breach of discipline and duty under the circumstances, as Armes was wounded and Buffalo Bill served in the army with me when I commanded a frontier fort and I became greatly attached to him, for he was a splendid fellow, and I only wish we had his match on our side."

"Now, Seldon, I have work to be done and I wish you to pick me out the best man to accomplish it."

"Yes, sir."

"There is going to be some decided move of our enemies very soon, for either they are sending off a force to make an attack elsewhere, or they are pretending to do so to make us believe they have weakened their army and thus attack them."

"Yes, sir, I reported to you that troops were moving in considerable force from their center."

"True, and I wish to know just what they are doing, and you must find me a man to enter their lines as a spy."

"It is a very perilous undertaking, general, but I suppose I can find a man to do it."

"I believe you were from this part of the country and know it well?"

"I was born, sir, about forty miles from here, but have hunted, as a boy and youth, all through this part of the country many times."

"Then it is a man who knows the country as you do, who must play the spy."

"That means, general, that you would be glad to have me volunteer as a spy?"

"I hardly dared ask it of you, Captain Seldon."

"I do not approve of a spy's work, general, yet it is my duty to serve you in any way within my power, and if you care to intrust to me your orders I will do all in my power to obey them."

"Well do I know that you will, Captain Seldon, and you shall be remembered for the good work I assure you."

"I would rather intrust the work to you than to any one else I know, and I will tell you just what my plans are; but when can you go?"

"To-night, sir."

"Good! and I can hope for your early return?"

"If I am not captured and hanged, sir, I will be back again at the very earliest moment possible."

"Now we will look over these maps, and then I will explain what I wish you to accomplish."

It was two hours before Cecil Seldon left the general's quarters, and he went at once to his own, a couple of miles distant, and in advance of the main line of the Confederate Army.

He was in his tent until nightfall, and then he appeared attired in a well-worn homespun suit, a slouch hat, hickory shirt, heavy boots and with his handsome brown silken mustache cut off, while his hair had been clipped close.

It would take a very close scrutiny of his best friend to know him as he then appeared, and he seemed well satisfied with the change as he glanced at himself in a small hand glass.

Leaving his camp on horseback, he was accompanied by Hurley the scout, who rode along with him for some miles, when Captain Seldon said:

"I will halt here, Hurley, for I dare not go any further on horseback."

With a clasp of the hand he went on his way on foot, while Hurley returned to camp leading

his horse and feeling the greatest anxiety about his commander, for he knew what his mission was.

After a walk of a dozen miles through mountain paths, Captain Seldon saw a light ahead.

"Yes, it is the home of Hurley's parents."

"I felt that I could not be wrong."

As he drew near the light he saw that it shone from the window of a large and comfortable house situated in a valley.

He approached cautiously and at last knocked at the door.

From an upper window a face peered out and a voice asked:

"Well, what do you want?"

"I have a message for you, Squire Hurley, from John."

"All right."

"I'll come right down," was the answer.

Five minutes later the door was opened cautiously and an old man appeared, lamp in hand.

"Come in and tell us of our boy, for he has not dared come home of late, with the blue-coats raiding through the valley day and night."

"But who are you, young man?"

"You knew me long years ago, squire, as Cecil Seldon, and I came here to ask your aid, for I knew that you would not refuse me."

"Come right in, my boy, and tell me what I can do for you, for never could I refuse you anything, for did you not years ago save our boy John from drowning?"

"You see I have not forgotten you."

CHAPTER XII.

UNDER SUSPICION.

It was early the next morning when the disguised Confederate officer left the home of John Hurley's parents, and he went as the driver of a wagon heavily laden with supplies which the old man had managed to hide away from foraging soldiers.

There were vegetables in plenty, fruit, eggs, chickens and butter, and Cecil Seldon was to be the enterprising market-man who was to take the supplies into the Union lines and sell them to the officers.

He carried a pass with him, which allowed the bearer to furnish supplies to the Union officers, and it was signed by the commanding general of the army of the United States.

This pass had been taken from a prisoner captured some days before by Seldon's Mounted Minute Men and came in most opportunely for the officer spy who was to invade the Union lines.

It furthermore protected him from any soldiers who might wish to raid his wagon of tempting provisions.

Down the valley road drove the officer spy, and well acquainted with the country he flanked around until he reached the line of Union pickets.

He found them, after some parleying, and to the query if their money was not as good as that of officers, he replied that those particular supplies were destined for the table of the Union commander himself.

So he went on his way rejoicing, and, as he passed through each ordeal that followed, he had reason to congratulate himself more and more upon his success.

It was nearly sunset when at last he drew near the headquarters of the Union general, and was permitted to drive up to his commissary tent, the officer who read his pass and permitted him to go on, congratulating himself that he was a member of the mess and would come in for his share of the edibles.

As night had come on and it had begun to rain, the wagon was not unloaded, but placed in position until morning, and the mountaineer driver, as he was supposed to be, was allowed to roam about at will, there certainly being considered no harm in him.

That night there was a counsel of general officers, and as no one was out in the driving rain, excepting the sentinels, and the orderlies who led the horses of the generals to shelter as they arrived, the daring spy crept from his wagon, and made his way to the rear of the large headquarters tent.

All unmindful of the rain falling in torrents, he lay close against the canvas walls of the tent, and listened as attentively as a wild beast awaiting for its prey.

At last he crept away, crawled up into his wagon, drenched to the skin, and lay down wrapped in his blankets, wholly unmindful of his discomfort when he considered all that he had discovered in the way of information as to just what more was intended by the Federal commander.

The storm blew away with the night, and when the day dawned the officer spy was up and building a fire, presumable to cook his breakfast, but in reality to dry himself by.

"Ho, friend, did your wagon leak so as to wet you through, for if so I guess, your provender is no good?" asked a sergeant, coming up to him.

"No, I got wet before I turned in for the night."

"What were you doing abroad in the rain, when you should have been in your wagon, for the commissary told you to keep close, for I heard him?"

"Oh, I was looking about the camps, for I like to see soldiers."

"Well, get your provisions out, for the general has half a dozen division commanders to breakfast with him this morning, for mighty few dared face the rain and return to their quarters last night."

The officer spy set to work and soon had his wagon unloaded, the things being placed in the commissary tent.

The latter made a list of all, and the prices, and handed over the money just as the sergeant came back again with an aide-de-camp, and said:

"That's the man, sir, and you see he is wet as a drowned rat."

"I thought it best to report the fact, sir, as he was told to keep in his camp, and I saw where tracks in the mud led from his wagon up to the general's tent and back again, while you can see, sir, an impression upon the ground, by the canvas, where some one has evidently been lying down in the mud."

"Then, too, sir, there is a small cut in the tent, as though done with a knife."

"Sergeant Marshall, you have done well to report this man, for he has a suspicious look, and it is hard to tell whether these Tennesseans are Union men or Rebels."

"Come, my man, how is it that you are wet through, and all smeared with mud?" and the officer turned toward the spy.

"I was curious to see the camps, sir, and got wet and muddy, sir."

"That is a poor excuse."

"Sergeant, put that man under arrest, and I will report him to the general after breakfast."

"I have a pass, sir, if you will look at it, sir," and there was not the slightest show of anxiety as the officer spy held forth the paper.

"Yes, it is the general's pass, and I will keep it for the present."

"Sergeant, search the man and then guard him closely," and the lieutenant stood by to see his orders thoroughly carried out.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DISCOVERY.

THE search of the Confederate officer revealed not a slip of paper to betray him, though he had a list of what things he had in his wagon, and the prices he was to ask for them.

His shoes, hat and the lining of his clothes were thoroughly searched, but with no result.

"Now, sir, I suppose you will let me go?" he asked the aide-de-camp, when the ordeal of search was ended.

"Not a bit of it, my man, for I firmly believe you are a spy, and if proven to be one, Sergeant Marshall should wear shoulder-straps for his clever discovery of you."

"You believe me to be a spy, you say, sir?"

"I do."

"Well, sir, I am at your mercy, and I have no way of proving my innocence."

An hour after the prisoner was led before the general, who had breakfasted heartily upon fried chicken, eggs and fresh butter, and then been told that the man who gave him the treat was supposed to be a spy.

"Here is the man, sir, and he had this pass," said the aide-de-camp.

The general glanced at the prisoner, who met his gaze unflinchingly, and then at the pass, while he asked:

"What reason have you, Lieutenant Kane, for believing the man to be a spy?"

Sergeant Marshall reported to me, sir, that he found the prisoner wet through and through and with his clothes covered with mud, and that he had been ordered by the commissary to keep his wagon, sir, which you see is camped not far away, sir."

"Well?"

"He, the sergeant, observed tracks in the mud leading from the wagon to your tent and back, sir, and you will observe where a man's form has been lying down by the canvas wall, close outside, and there is a slit in the tent, sir."

"Ah! the sergeant is a wide-awake man."

"What else?"

"The prisoner could give no other account of himself than to say that he had been looking about the camps, but had he been, sir, he would have been halted by the sentinels, and inquiry shows that he was not challenged by one of them."

"More and more suspicious, lieutenant, I admit."

"And the pass, sir?"

"This is not the man to whom this pass was given, but to a loyal mountaineer who was to bring us provisions."

"How did you get this pass, sir?"

"From the man to whom you gave it, sir, for I took his place and brought the provisions you wished."

"You are a very different looking individual from what he was, sir, a wholly different man, for he was of the mediocre kind and you are not."

"Thank you, sir," and Cecil Seldon bowed.

"Are you a Tennessean?" asked the general.

"I am, sir."

"From this part of the State?"

"Yes, sir, I was born not a great many miles from here."

"Then there are men in our lines who should know you."

"There may be, sir."

"Lieutenant Kane, have Sergeant Marshall look up the men in the command who are East Tennessee mountaineers and order them to report at once to me here."

The lieutenant saluted, and as he turned to depart, said:

"Major Godfrey Granger is from this part of the country, sir, and he knows all who are loyal or Rebels."

"True; my compliments to him, and ask him to report to me here at once."

The aide disappeared, while the prisoner, under guard, was left standing near to await the result of the investigation into his loyalty.

The major was soon seen returning with the aide-de-camp, and it was evident that he had been told why he had been sent for, as he said when approaching the headquarters:

"Yes, Lieutenant Kane, I will know him if he is a native of these mountains, I am sure, and if I do I can tell you whether he is a Union man or a Rebel."

The general received the young officer in a way that showed he was a favorite at headquarters, and said:

"I sent for you, Major Granger, to see if you know a man here whom we have very good reasons for believing to be a spy."

"Yes, general."

"Lieutenant Kane, have the prisoner brought here, and I will explain to Major Granger the circumstances of his arrest."

The lieutenant departed, but very shortly returned with the prisoner, under escort of two soldiers.

With firm step and upright bearing the Confederate spy advanced, and his face was devoid of the slightest sign of anxiety as he faced the man who was to decide his fate.

The major gave a quick glance and his face flushed, then turned deadly pale, and before the gaze that met his he lowered his eyes.

"I see that you recognize the man, Major Granger?" said the general.

"Yes, I regret to say that I do, as he can only be within our lines as a spy, for he is a cavalry officer, general, Captain Cecil Seldon, of the Confederate Army."

CHAPTER XIV.

GLOOMY FOREBODINGS.

IF Cecil Seldon had treasured up the hope that Godfrey Granger would do for him as he had done for Godfrey Granger, the contrary flashed upon him with startling suddenness when he heard his supposed friend deliberately say who he was.

Was that his boyhood friend, the one whom he had saved, with another young companion, from drowning one day in the Little Tennessee River at the risk of his own life, the one who had been his cadet chum for four years and who had been as dear to him as a brother could be?

Was it the man who, when a spy in the Confederate lines and under the shadow of a death upon the gallows, he had deliberately told a falsehood to save and had then set free?

"Yes, it is Godfrey Granger my friend that betrays me," mused Cecil Seldon, and drawing himself up proudly he said aloud:

"Disguise is useless, sir, when I am betrayed by one who I believed would at least befriend me."

"I am Cecil Seldon, captain of cavalry in the Confederate Army, and a spy in your lines, I stand ready to meet my fate."

Every eye was upon him now in admiration, and the general said with some feeling:

"I am sorry, sir, you deemed it your duty to enter our lines as a spy, for you know what your fate must be, and it is with regret that I see a brave man throw his life away."

"Lieutenant Kane, remove the prisoner, and see that he is placed under a special guard."

The lieutenant led the prisoner away to a log cabin some distance from headquarters, and which was used as a temporary guard-house.

It had once been a negro cabin, and was strongly built, having but two windows and a door.

Across the windows heavy bars had been nailed, and the door was fastened with a padlock and chain.

In the cabin was a cot, table and chair, and when the prisoner had entered, the door was closed and locked and a sentinel was placed on duty there, his beat being to continually walk around the little prison.

It was with a strange feeling of gloom that Cecil Seldon sat down upon the little cot and began to think.

He had obeyed his general's orders and this was the end, or else the end must soon come, for little mercy was shown to a spy.

Hope had been before him with ambition to rise in his career rapidly to high rank.

Now all was dashed to the ground by one fell blow and every hope was crushed.

He felt now that the maiden whom he so fondly loved would soon be called upon to mourn him as dead, nay worse, to know that he had died upon a gallows as a spy.

Was she still true to him?

This thought would be at once banished when it forced itself into his brain, for he would never doubt her, never!

Had not Louise Layton said to him, that, though she was a Northern girl it did not alter her love for him, and that she would be true, that only death should part them?

Such were the thoughts that crowded upon him as he sat there in his log prison, and what caused him to suffer most was that Godfrey Granger had seemed to gloat in the chance to betray him.

"Perhaps I wrong him, and he is playing a part merely to get a chance to save me."

"It would be so with me, were he in my place and I saw no other way of aiding him, so why not with him?"

"Yes, it must be so, and that I have wronged him."

This thought gave the prisoner some hope.

But the day passed away with gloomy forebodings of harm befalling his comrades in arms, for well he knew, from all that he had heard at the meeting of the generals, how the next night a flank movement was to be made to strike the Confederates in the rear, rush down upon their depot of supplies and catch their army between two heavy columns.

This move was not suspected by the Confederate general, who did not know that the Federal Army was being largely reinforced each night, and that the army holding the ground then would make the flank movement, while the reinforcing column would hold the lines vacated, thus entrapping the Southerners between two fires.

"Oh, that I could escape from here!" said Cecil Seldon over and over again, as the gloomy foreboding of a terrible defeat for his own people flashed across his mind.

But he was in a cabin most strongly built, manacles were upon his feet, and around the little prison came constantly to his ears the steady tread of the sentinel, while the door was locked without, and not a ray of hope came to cheer his gloomy thoughts.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SENTINEL.

AT noon dinner was brought in to the prisoner by a soldier, who said:

"The general orders that you get all you wish to eat, sir, for he don't wish to treat a man who is on the eve of dying."

"He is very kind; but when am I to be tried, my man?"

"I believe there is to be no trial, sir, since Major Granger recognized you, and you then admitted that you were a spy in our lines."

"Oh, yes, and that will condemn me; but what is to be my sentence?"

"It is to be read to you this afternoon, sir, for the general has already passed sentence upon you, and it's my idea that you have a very short while to live, so you better make your peace with Heaven."

Cecil Seldon made no reply, and the soldier was surprised to see that he appeared to greatly enjoy his dinner, and he said as much to his comrades when he went out of the cabin.

That afternoon Lieutenant Kane entered and read the sentence aloud to the prisoner, which was in effect that he was to be executed the following evening at sunset, that he was to be hanged by the neck until dead.

He received the sentence in silence, and merely asked if he would be allowed to write several letters.

"Yes, I will send you pen, ink and paper this afternoon, sir," was the lieutenant's response, and with the witnesses who had accompanied him he departed.

"Game, isn't he?" said one officer.

"Cool as an icicle," another remarked.

"Never made the slightest sign to show that he dreaded his fate."

"No, he is as brave as a lion," and Lieutenant Kane added:

"It is painful in the extreme to have to send such a man to the gallows."

The supper hour came and the prisoner, as before, enjoyed his meal and talked pleasantly with the soldier who brought it.

Then night came on, and the tread of the guard leaving a sentinel at his cabin door was heard by the prisoner, after which all was silence for some time.

Then a low voice at the window said:

"Captain."

"Who calls?"

"Can you come to the window?"

"I am manacled."

"I know, but make your way here if you can."

The prisoner did so and asked:

"Who are you?"

"The sentinel."

"Well?"

"You are Cecil Seldon?"

"Yes."

"A captain in the Confederate Army?"

"Yes."

"You do not know me?"

"No."

"Well, I am one you saved from drowning in the Little Tennessee that day with Godfrey Granger, and when he recognized you to-day and caused you to be sentenced to die as a spy, I now intend to prove my gratitude and save you."

"But that is impossible."

"No, it is not."

"I am manacled heavily, and the door is locked, while you—"

"I slipped the keys out of the guard-house before I came on duty and I can set you free, for I have the countersign and—"

"But you will only get yourself into trouble, Duncan Sperry, for I know who you are now."

"Yes, I am Duncan Sperry, the son of your father's overseer, and it is just like you to think of my getting into trouble; but let me tell you that all my kindred, all my interests are with the South, and though I enlisted in the Union Army, and would have remained in it to the end, now, to save you, I shall desert and go with you to-night into the Confederate lines."

"Think well before you act, Duncan, for I would not gain my freedom and feel that you were the sufferer."

"No more will I be."

"Come, I put on a uniform under my own, and it is one I cribbed from Major Granger's tent, so I'll hand it in to you, and you will look the Union officer all right."

The sentinel was hastily disrobing as he spoke, and in a short while handed in through the bars of the window a uniform coat and black cavalry hat.

"The keys are in the coat pocket to unlock your manacles, and I will soon have the door open," said the sentinel.

It took the prisoner but a short while to get on the coat and draw the hat down over his eyes. Then he unlocked the manacles around his ankles and at once felt that there was indeed a chance for him to escape.

The door was then slowly opened and he grasped the hand of the sentinel, while he said:

"My brave friend, Duncan, you are indeed risking much to save me."

"No more than you would do for me, Captain Cecil."

"But let me give you the countersign, and then tell you the best way to go to escape the sentinels and meeting any one."

"It is now ten o'clock, and by the time the relief comes at midnight, we can be far away."

"Now hear the countersign—it is *Rebel Spy!*"

"A very appropriate countersign for the night, Duncan."

"But I am ready," and the two moved away from the log cabin, the sentinel following several paces behind the pretended Union officer.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SPY'S REPORT.

It was a dangerous gantlet for the deserter and the spy to run, through the line of sentinels which they had to pass before they could secure their liberty.

But all were passed without a suspicion that anything was wrong, as no foes were supposed to be in the lines, and to have the countersign.

Both soldiers, they made no false moves, and at last the outer picket-line was reached, and Captain Seldon halted for quite a chat with the sergeant in command.

He even gave him certain advice, stated that he was going to make a reconnaissance further out, and calling to the deserter to follow, went on his way.

"We are safe now, Duncan, and we have an hour before our escape will be discovered."

"Within half that time we will reach my own advance posts, and there we can get horses, for I am anxious to put the general upon his guard as to the reinforcements and movements of the enemy, that he may not be caught unawares."

"Come, for we have a rough walk of it before us in the darkness."

So saying, Cecil Seldon led the way once more, and after a walk of half an hour halted at the base of a ridge and gave a hail:

"Ho, the outpost!"

"Yes, we have our guns on you," came the instant response from the top of the ridge.

"Well done, Covington, you are on the alert I see."

"It is the captain."

"All right, sir, we know you now," cried Covington, and the two fugitives rapidly ascended the path to the top of the ridge where the five men on duty there were found ready for a foe if foe it was.

"We heard you coming, sir, and so got ready; but how you are changed, captain."

"Yes, Covington, I took a fancy to shave off my mustache and have my hair cut short; but let me tell you to keep the sharpest lookout, for an advance may be expected at any moment by the enemy."

"Now I wish two of your horses and I will send them back to you by daylight."

The horses were led up from the camp in the rear, and mounting, Captain Seldon and Duncan Sperry rode rapidly on their way toward headquarters, Covington having given his command the countersign for the night, so that they would not be delayed on the way.

Sentinel after sentinel was rapidly passed and the two riders dashed up to the quarters of the commandant of the Confederate Army just three hours after leaving the little cabin where Cecil Seldon had been a prisoner condemned to death as a spy.

The sentinel on duty at once called an orderly and the general was awakened and told that Captain Seldon wished an immediate interview with him.

It was promptly granted, and a quarter of an hour after the general was acquainted with the perilous undertaking of Cecil Seldon as a spy, his discovery of the plans of the Federal commander, his recognition as a Confederate officer and his condemnation to death as a spy.

"But for our old boyhood friend, general, I would have been put to death, and he, to save me, could do but one thing, desert."

"He is a Tennessean, his home and kindred dwell not far from here, and we went to a country school together when we were boys."

"His father and brother are in the Confederate Army, but he went on the other side, and was a good soldier, and would have been to the end of the war, only his friendship for me caused him to desert, as to allow my escape and remain he would have been promptly shot."

"Under these circumstances, general, I would ask a position for him where he will not be readily exposed to capture, for that would mean his death, sir."

"Of course it would, Captain Seldon, and I will give him a position near headquarters; but it appears to me that in your appeal for him you forget yourself, for as surely as you are recaptured, you will be hanged as a spy, and as captain of scouts your duties are most hazardous, so I can offer you a staff position with me."

"I thank you, general, and I appreciate the honor, sir, but I prefer to remain as captain of the Mounted Minute Men, feeling that as a scout I can do far better service, sir."

"As you please, Captain Seldon, only be very careful not to be taken, for it means your instant death."

"The information that you have brought me is of the utmost importance, and I will act upon it at once to prevent a crushing defeat, so while I call a council of general officers, you please remain, and let all understand the situation fully."

"I will do so, sir, gladly, for only by having every point defended, can we checkmate the intended move of the enemy," was Cecil Seldon's response, and the general felt that the gallant officer had not exaggerated the situation in the least degree.

CHAPTER XVII.

TWO FRIENDS IN CAMP.

LIEUTENANT GEORGE ARMES lay in his quarters in the rear of the army, under the care of the surgeon, who gave every hope that the wound he had received would not be as serious as it was at first supposed.

The stanching of the hemorrhage had saved him, the surgeon had said, and the bullet had not penetrated the lung, as believed.

"You will be ready for duty in a month or more," said the surgeon one morning, and he gave orders to allow the gallant lieutenant's friends to call upon him.

The first one to arrive was Buffalo Bill, the scout of the plains, and the face of the hero in buckskin wore an anxious look, such a look as no personal danger or trouble could have brought upon his handsome countenance.

"Well, Bill, you need not look so blue, for Old Sawbones has just left me and says I will be in the saddle in a few weeks," said Lieutenant Armes.

"I just met him, sir, and most glad I am to hear it; but I have bad news for you."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir; our Confederate captain is captured."

"What, Cecil Seldon?"

"Yes, sir."

"That is bad; but we must do what we can to help him."

"It is more than you suppose, lieutenant, for he was captured in our lines as a spy."

"Great God! this is terrible."

"It is indeed, sir."

"You are sure that it is Seldon?"

"Yes, sir, for I just left headquarters and his capture is all the talk there."

"How did it happen?"

"He came into the lines disguised as a farmer, selling provisions and had a pass he got from some one to whom the general had given it."

"There was a consultation of general officers, sir, and he slipped out of his wagon last night in the rain and heard all that they said in council."

"He is a bold fellow to risk so much."

"Yes, sir, and it means his death, for he has been sentenced already."

"We must help him, Buffalo Bill."

"Indeed we must sir, and that is why I came to see you, knowing your influence."

"How was he discovered?"

"He had cut off his hair and mustache, dressed up in homespun and was fairly well disguised; but his tracks in the sand from his wagon to the headquarter tent left a trail which Sergeant Marshall, an old frontier soldier, noticed, and he was accused of being a spy and could give no account of himself."

"Then as he must be from Tennessee, to know the roads so well, Major Godfrey Granger was sent for and recognized him at once."

"What!"

"Godfrey Granger did this?"

"Yes, sir."

"The identification of Cecil Seldon devolved upon Godfrey Granger alone?"

"It did, sir."

"And he told who he was?"

"He did."

"Then Major Godfrey Granger is a contemptible fellow, an ungrateful wretch, and I shall tell him so once I am able to leave this bed."

"But it was his duty, sir, as an officer of the army to expose the Confederate captain, though of course we cannot but regret it."

"My dear Cody, there are duties and duties, there is friendship and treachery to be taken into consideration in this instance which leaves no escape for Godfrey Granger bearing the brand of coward and ingratitude."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Then there is something behind his act of betrayal?"

"There is indeed, and I will show you what it is."

"I fear I am exciting you, sir, and—"

"Nothing of the kind, for I don't intend to die, go into hysterics or worry myself into a fever."

"I wish you to know that Godfrey Granger and Cecil Seldon were boys together in this very country, living on plantations that adjoined up in the valley."

"They were devoted chums, and Granger told me that Seldon had several times saved his life."

"They were cadets at West Point together, when I was there, and the most sincere friends."

"One day Seldon saved an army officer and his daughter from drowning in the Hudson, and Granger helped by getting a boat."

"They both fell in love with the girl, and I don't wonder at that, for all of the cadets did the same, I am one of the number."

"From that day Granger hated Seldon, and the latter resigned, as a Southerner, and joined the Confederacy, while Granger, though also a Southerner, remained and took first honors."

"With his rival out of the way as a Rebel, Granger laid siege to the heart and hand of Miss Louise Layton, and I believe that it is to get Seldon wholly out of the way that he has now betrayed him as a spy, when he could have passed him by."

"If he has done this, Lieutenant Armes, he is a contemptible fellow indeed," was Buffalo Bill's energetic response.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MAJOR AND THE SCOUT.

"But that is not all, Buffalo Bill," continued Lieutenant Armes, when the scout had been made acquainted with the facts of the early friendship between Granger and Seldon.

"Yes, lieutenant, I am ready to hear all you care to tell."

"You know that Granger and I have been firm friends?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, he told me of his having lately volunteered to enter the Rebel lines as a spy."

"I heard that he did, sir, and brought back most valuable information."

"So it has been reported, while, on the contrary, though he gleaned valuable information, drew maps and took notes of the numbers of men at certain posts, he brought nothing with him, for he was discovered by an old Tennessee friend and taken as a prisoner to the Confederate general's headquarters, his case bearing a most striking similarity to Seldon's, as you will see."

"But he escaped?"

"Yes, after it was as well as proven that he was a United States officer, by his captor, Captain Seldon came up and was appealed to by the Rebel scout to identify him."

"He recognized him at a glance, but coolly told the scout that though the resemblance was great between him and Major Granger, he was not the man."

"In other words, sir, he deliberately told a lie to save his friend?"

"That is just it, Buffalo Bill."

"And then, sir?"

"And then he took the major with him, made him give up his papers, and, after keeping him until he was sure his verbal report could do no harm, set him free."

"A manly act, sir, though a dangerous one."

"Yes, where friendship, or desire to save the life of an old friend, outweighed duty."

"And, placed in the same position with the man who had saved him from hanging, when his denial would save him from the gallows, Major Granger now betrays him?"

"That is the case, Buffalo Bill, if Granger did so."

"He did so, sir, for I had it from the lips of those who were present, though of course they did not know the circumstances of the case."

"Well, I know all the circumstances of the case, for I had it from Major Granger's own lips, that he owed his life, in the manner stated, to Cecil Seldon, though he did not expect to have to be placed in the same position I am sure."

"Well, lieutenant, would it do any good for you to see the major?"

"For what reason, Buffalo Bill?"

"Well, sir, he has a vast deal of influence, you know, with the general, and at Washington."

"True, and it would be well to see him, and I believe I can so place the matter before him that he will have to act to save Seldon, for saved he must be."

"Yes, sir, I am heart and soul with you in that determination."

"Then will you go and look up Major Granger for me?"

"Yes, sir."

"And bring him here with all haste."

"I'll do so, sir, for there is no time to lose."

With this Buffalo Bill left the quarters of the wounded officer, and went in search of Major Godfrey Granger.

He found that officer in his quarters, and at once made known to him that Lieutenant George Armes would like to see him.

"Tell Armes I will call this evening, for I have an engagement now."

"It is most important, sir."

"Well, I will call as soon as I can."

"Pardon me, Major Granger, but Lieutenant Armes wishes to see you upon a matter of importance which will not allow of delay."

"What is it?"

"I cannot tell you, sir."

"Do you know?"

"I do, sir."

"Then tell me."

"I must refuse, sir."

"You refuse to obey my orders, sir?"

"I am not under your command, sir, and I do refuse," was the cool reply of Buffalo Bill.

"But I command you to obey, scout."

"And I refuse, sir, to make known to you the reason for Lieutenant Armes wishing to see you, sir."

"I shall report your disobedience to the general, Buffalo Bill."

"Do so, sir, and you will be informed that I am not subject to your orders."

"Shall I report to Lieutenant Armes that you refuse to call and see him, for if so, wounded as he is, I am sure he will come to visit you?"

There was something that impressed the major in the words and manner of Buffalo Bill and he replied:

"I will go there within the next half-hour."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE REFUSAL.

JUST what took place during his visit to Major Granger Buffalo Bill made known to Lieutenant Armes, and the latter was prepared for meeting with a very flat refusal of his wishes from his senior officer, for he said:

"Major Granger is a moody fellow and he will doubtless be in a bad humor when he calls; but I shall do my best with him."

"I will leave you now, sir."

"No, I prefer to have a witness, or rather a hearer, for I wish you to go into the next room there and await his coming."

"As you please, lieutenant," and, as the hospital quarters were in a large old plantation mansion, Buffalo Bill went into the room indicated.

Perhaps it was curiosity that made Major Granger so prompt in his visit to the wounded officer, but he came before the time he specified was up.

"Ah, Armes, glad to see you so much better, and I was told by that wild fellow of the plains that you wanted to see me upon a most important matter," and the major took a seat near the wounded officer.

"Yes, major, I learn that Cecil Seldon has been captured?"

"It is so."

"And is accused of being a spy?"

"He is a spy."

"How do you know?"

"He confessed as much."

"Where is he?"

"In the guard-house, and sentenced to death."

"When does the execution take place?"

"To-morrow at sunset."

"How was he known?"

Major Granger flushed, and after a slight hesitation said:

"Well, he was suspected and I was called upon, and of course I had to do my duty."

"Yet he disregarded duty for friendship in your case."

"That was in the Rebel Army, you know."

"I see no difference, for we are fighting our kinsmen and friends, and they have just as good an army, as well disciplined a force and led by as brave and skillful officers as we have."

"You argue their cause well," said the major with a sneer.

"You, as a Southern man should not decry them when I acknowledge their worth."

"Well, I did what I deemed was my duty, and that ends it."

"It does not end it, Major Granger."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I, as you do in more than one instance, owe our lives to that brave Confederate officer, and if he is in our lines as a spy, he is doing just what you did, so it is for you to save him."

"I can do nothing."

"You can do much if you try."

"What?"

"You can make known to the general just what he did for you, and ask his life in return for the life he saved."

"I cannot."

"You can, and must."

"Must, and to me, Lieutenant Armes?"

"Yes, to you, for it is your duty to save that man, to have his life spared."

"I do not so see my duty."

"I see it, as he saved you, and I see it as he saved my life a short while since and the life of Buffalo Bill."

"If these facts are made known to the general he will, I believe, allow him to be treated as a prisoner of war at least."

"He will not."

"Then he will grant him a respite until you can place the facts before President Lincoln, and he is a just, a noble man and will certainly spare him, allowing him to be considered a prisoner of war and not a spy, for he admires bravery, and believes in justice to all."

"I am sorry to say, Lieutenant Armes, that I can do nothing."

"Then you refuse to take the initiative in this matter?"

"I do."

"Think it over, Major Granger."

"I will do nothing in the matter."

"Then I will."

"What will you do?"

"I will try to save him."

"How?"

"That I will decide upon after a consultation with a friend," was the cold response of Lieutenant Armes.

"What friend?"

"Buffalo Bill."

"An Indian-killer?"

"Yes, a man I am proud to own as my friend, a man who has made a record, young as he is, and true as steel to friend and foe."

"If I can see my way clear in this matter, I will do what I can."

"No, I do not ask it now, for I believe I do see my way clear; but the surgeon says I must not worry, so I will not detain you longer."

It was a cool dismissal, and with a wave of his hand, Major Granger left, for he so understood it.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SCOUT'S PLAN.

WHEN Major Granger had left the room, with a muttered imprecation which the wounded lieutenant did not catch, Buffalo Bill re-entered from the adjoining chamber.

"You heard all, Buffalo Bill?"

"Yes, sir."

"What is your opinion of his refusal to aid Seldon?"

"It would seem to me that he had some strong reason for not doing so, I should say a prejudice against acting for his old friend."

"So I would say, and he has."

"The truth is, he wants Seldon out of the way."

"But why, lieutenant?"

"He wishes to win Miss Layton."

"But she is a Northern girl, her father is a general now in the United States Army, and Captain Seldon is a Rebel."

"My dear Cody, your life upon the plains has not given you much experience in affairs of the heart, for let me tell you that love invades the enemy's camp and our affections are not governed by whether those we are most fond of wear the blue or the gray."

"Miss Layton loved Seldon before the war broke out, and he loved her, and if he is spared, then their regard will outlast the years of civil strife and end in a happy marriage."

"If Seldon dies, then Major Granger sees his way clear to win an heiress and a beautiful wife, though she is a woman who can have but one love."

"Her father will leave her a large fortune, and a bachelor uncle and an old maid aunt have already left her a great deal of money, so that she is a golden prize, while Granger is poor, as his home was South, his father's slaves are free and he will get nothing."

"Do you see, Buffalo Bill, the point I make?"

"Yes, sir, a blind man could see it, and I half believe you are right, for I can get hold of no other motive for the major's betrayal of the Confederate captain and determination not to save him, if he could, or even make the effort."

"Well, we must act then."

"I am ready, sir."

"What would be your plan?"

"To aid his escape to-morrow night, sir."

"How?"

"Well, sir, my plan would be to disguise myself as an officer, approach the sentinel at the cabin, which is isolated, and just hold him up with a revolver under his eyes."

"If he showed resistance I am strong enough to muzzle and master him without doing any harm."

"Yes, no harm must come to one of our own men."

"I would not harm him, sir, for the world."

"But would master him, bind and gag him, and giving Captain Seldon a disguise to put on, I would lead him to my camp outside the lines and then have my scouts hold him prisoner until the information he has gained will be of no service to the Rebels, when he could be set free."

"Your plan is a good one, if it could be done without bloodshed or discovery."

"Trust me for that, sir."

"But you are not readily disguised."

"I could arrange that, sir, by putting my hair up under an officer's hat, wearing a false beard, for I can make one easily, dressing in uniform and stooping in my gait."

"Well, we will keep your plan as a *dernier resort*, Buffalo Bill, and try my plan first."

"I am ready, sir, to obey your orders."

"Of course if you carried out your plot it would be supposed that the Confederate had an accomplice in camp."

"Yes, sir."

"And your men would keep quiet?"

"Yes, sir, they would know only what I told them they should."

"Well, now I'll tell you my idea."

"Yes, sir."

"You are to carry it out."

"All right, sir."

"You are to go to the general and tell him that you have come to speak a word for the Rebel Spy."

"Yes, Lieutenant Armes."

"Tell him that he resigned from West Point because he was a Southerner, and that he stood brightest in his class when he did so."

"Tell him that as a cadet at West Point he risked his life to save, then, Major Layton and his daughter, and that now, General Layton will vouch for it."

"I will, sir."

"You must make known to the general that when Major Granger went as a spy into the Confederate lines, just how Captain Seldon saved him, and that I will vouch for Granger's having told me so, for I will sacrifice Granger rather than have Seldon suffer death."

"By all means, Lieutenant Armes."

"Then tell him of our fight in the valley, and how he saved my life and yours, and set you free when you reported yourself a prisoner to him."

"I can dwell heavy on that scene, sir, for I was there, and I will," said Buffalo Bill with emphasis.

CHAPTER XXI.

LIEUTENANT ARMES'S PLAN.

"WHEN you have told the general all, Buffalo Bill, in the life of Captain Cecil Seldon, to demand a recognition at his hands, you will then ask him if his life cannot be spared in consideration of his saving that of Major Granger," resumed Lieutenant Armes.

"I will, sir."

"Say to him that as a further incentive his saving our lives should be taken into consideration."

"Yes, sir."

"You can incidentally refer to the service rendered as a cadet at West Point."

"I will, sir."

"And ask if all he has done will not counterbalance his having come as a spy into our lines."

"Doing just what Major Granger did?"

"Exactly."

"And I will ask if he cannot be considered as a prisoner of war, instead of as a spy."

"Yes."

"If he refuses?"

"Then beg a respite of ten days for him and we will see that General Layton learns the whole circumstances, as well as his daughter, and they

will make a plea to President Lincoln which I am sure will not go unheeded."

"If the general will only grant a respite, sir, it would be the best way to gain the Confederate captain's pardon."

"So I feel! but the general can pardon him if he will."

"And I hope that he will do so sincerely, sir."

"If not he must grant a respite."

"Yet should he refuse a pardon and a respite also, Lieutenant Armes?" asked Buffalo Bill anxiously.

"Then your plot will have to be carried into execution."

"And must save him, though it's best to let words do it, rather than actions, if they will do so."

"By all means."

"But, Buffalo Bill, I would not be surprised if the general sent for Major Granger, when you refer to that officer."

"All right, sir, I wish he would do so, for I prefer to talk of a man to his face."

"And if Granger seeks a getting out place just refer the general to my statement of what he told me, and that I am willing to be taken on a stretcher to his headquarters to make my report."

"I will, sir."

"Yes, Granger must not be left a single getting out place in this matter, after what I consider his heinous conduct, and I will destroy his chances with Miss Louise Layton, if painting him in his true colors will do it, for he has been underhanded, unmanly in his treatment of an old friend, Rebel officer and rival in love though he may be."

"So I feel, sir, and I'll talk Injun to the general, as we say on the plains, and only a brass band or file of soldiers can shut me off."

"I believe you will do your duty fully, Buffalo Bill, and for that reason place the matter in your hands, rather than in a delegation of my brother officers, for I feel that I could muster a full company of shoulder-straps to go before the general and do justice to this brave man."

"I am sure that you could, sir, and it might be better to have them go instead of me."

"No, indeed, you are the man to go singly."

"I've played a lone hand many a time, lieutenant, and won the game, but never with a general before; but I guess I hold trumps this time, as I represent a just cause."

"You do, indeed."

"Major Granger will be as cross as a hungry coyote, but I guess I can stand it."

"No doubt of that, and he will be furious with me; but I will be answerable for what I do, once I get out of this bed."

"If I talk much longer to you, sir, it is doubtful if you do get well, so I'll strike the trail for my quarters and rig up in my best buckskins, for my visit to the general."

"All right, I leave all in your hands, Buffalo Bill, but report to me the result the first moment that you can do so."

"I will, sir."

With this Buffalo Bill left the quarters of the wounded officer and made his way through the camp, taking in the exact situation of the cabin, where the Confederate spy was a prisoner and the approaches to it.

"One sentinel, that is all, and not a tent nearer than two hundred yards."

"It would be just a picnic to get him out of there if the sentinel was not one of our own men."

Then he went to his camp on the outside of the lines, and making his best toilet, mounted his horse and rode up to headquarters.

"The general is away on a ride along the lines, and will not return until night," said the sentinel in answer to his request to see the commander of the army.

CHAPTER XXII.

BUFFALO BILL'S PLEA.

BUFFALO BILL reported to Lieutenant Armes the absence of the general, and then, like a good soldier, made all preparations for carrying out his plot at night, to be ready in case his plea should fail for a pardon or a respite for the Confederate officer.

He got together two uniforms and hats, swords and belts, and then began to take the situation in fully as to the best way to lead the prisoner out of the lines.

He told his men that they must be ready to receive a prisoner and keep him in hiding until further orders.

Then he set to work to manufacture two false beards, and he showed a great deal of ingenuity in doing so.

From a woman in camp he secured some hairpins, to put up his long hair with, and when all of his traps were ready, placed them where he could get them at a moment's notice when needed.

Night came on and he was glad to see that the guard at the prisoner's cabin was not doubled.

He saw the general return with his staff, and noted that Major Granger was along.

Waiting until the general had had his supper, and was enjoying his cigar, he presented him-

self at headquarters, and was promptly admitted to the august presence of the general of the army.

He had served on the frontier under the general, who was a colonel then, and had fortunately made a good record for himself then, while, having rendered most valuable service since being in the Military Department of Tennessee, he was pretty sure of a welcome.

"Ah, Buffalo Bill, glad to see you, for you are always the bearer of valuable news, if it is not, as we could wish, cheering for our side," said the general pleasantly and he eyed with admiration the splendid specimen of manhood before him.

For a wonder the general was alone, for he had signified his intention of retiring early to get what rest he could to prepare him for the all-night siege that was to follow.

"I cannot say, general, that I have news, sir, but I have called to see you upon a most important matter, having been sent by Lieutenant George A. Armes of the Second Cavalry, and also coming upon my own accord as one deeply interested, sir, in the request I have to make."

"Well, Cody, you come from a very gallant officer, and one I regret to learn is severely wounded, while for your own sake I will be glad also to hear any request you have to make," responded the general.

Buffalo Bill bowed his thanks for the compliment to Lieutenant Armes and himself, and said:

"I come, general, to plead for the Rebel spy, Captain Cecil Seldon, sir."

"Ah! a bad cause you are pleading for, Cody," and the general's face grew stern.

"A cause, sir, that the bravest officers have undertaken, to glean truthful news of an enemy's movements, as witness the going of Major Godfrey Granger into the Confederate lines a short while since, sir, as a spy."

The general started and said:

"You know of this?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, what plea have you to offer in the case of this daring Rebel captain?"

"Are you acquainted at all with his career, may I ask, general?"

"I cannot say that I am."

"May I take up a few minutes of your valuable time to tell you of him, sir?"

"Yes, until I smoke my cigar, if you will, and I see just about a quarter of an hour in it," said the general, with a smile.

"Thank you, sir, I shall watch the cigar most closely, and not to delay I will say that Captain Seldon is a Southern man, and, as a cadet at West Point stood at the head of his class, but, before graduating resigned to go South."

"He had just prior to that, sir, saved General, then Major, Layton, and his daughter from drowning in the Hudson, at the risk of his own life."

"Ah, yes, I heard of that gallant act, I now remember; and so the Rebel spy is the cadet that rescued Layton and his daughter?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, that is to his credit, as well as his high standing as a cadet; but that was before the war, Cody."

"True, sir; but what I now have to tell you of his brave deeds is since the war," and Buffalo Bill felt that he had now to play his trump cards, so to speak.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE GENERAL HEARS PLAIN FACTS.

"I SEE that you have come armed for your plea, Buffalo Bill," the general said in response to the last remark of the scout.

"I have come to tell the plain truth, general, of a man whose act as a spy I do not deny, sir, yet who has done much to condone the offense even in the eyes of the great soldier which you are acknowledged to be."

The general bowed at the well-turned compliment and Buffalo Bill continued:

"What I now say, sir, is at the request of Lieutenant George Armes, for he knows the facts as they are."

"Proceed."

"I do not know, sir, whether Major Granger reported to you, or not, that he was arrested as a spy while in the Confederate lines?"

"He reported that he was arrested under suspicion, but as an old friend pretended to fail to recognize him, he was allowed to go free."

"Did he tell you, sir, that his old friend was Captain Cecil Seldon, his cadet chum at West Point, and who had several times saved his life in the past?"

"He certainly did not; but can this be the truth?"

"I have Lieutenant Armes's word for it, sir, that it is true."

"And how does he know it to be so?"

"Lieutenant Armes knows Captain Seldon well, and Major Granger told him of his escape through the denial of the Confederate officer that he was who he was, and thus he escaped hanging as a spy."

"This is remarkable, for under the same cir-

cumstances was Captain Seldon recognized by Major Granger, Cody."

"I am aware of that, general."

"And so it seemed there was no desire upon the part of Major Granger to shield the man."

"That is true, sir, apparently, and it rests with Major Granger's own conscience that it is so."

"But he surely should have said some word in behalf of this man, his former friend, his rescuer from death."

"It would seem so, sir, but that is with Major Granger to state his reasons."

"I will send for him and see why he has so acted," and an orderly was dispatched to request the presence of Major Granger immediately at headquarters.

When the orderly had departed Buffalo Bill said:

"I have another word in favor of the Rebel spy, sir."

"Out with it, Buffalo Bill, for I am becoming more and more interested in this man."

"You remember, sir, how Lieutenant Armes was sent upon a scout with his men, I going as guide, some days ago?"

"Certainly."

"You recall, sir, that we ran upon the Confederate Minute Men, acting as scouts, and under Captain Seldon?"

"Ah! he was their commander, then?"

"Yes, sir, and we were being beaten back, when Lieutenant Armes was wounded, and at the same time his horse was shot under him."

"I rode back to his aid, when my horse also fell under me, and then Captain Seldon called to me to surrender, and made his men cease firing."

"I obeyed, and he came forward, when I told him who it was that was wounded, and begged that I might go for a surgeon and ambulance, when I would return and give myself up as a prisoner."

"And he allowed it?"

"He did, sir, and cared for the lieutenant so well that he stanchd the flow of blood from his wound, while, upon my return with a surgeon and the ambulance, he told me that he would not hold me prisoner, for I had been caught in trying to save the lieutenant."

"So he allowed Lieutenant Armes and yourself to return to our lines?"

"He did, sir, and that, too, when I am sure he had men enough near to have captured the whole party."

"I see."

"And that is why Lieutenant Armes asked me to come to you, sir, and plead that this brave man, to whom Major Granger, Lieutenant Armes and myself owe our lives, not to speak of General Layton and his daughter, shall not be hanged as a spy, but be pardoned of his offense, and treated as a prisoner of war."

"If this cannot be done, general, we urge that he may have a respite until the whole facts can be placed before President Lincoln, so that he may use his clemency toward him."

"Well, Cody, you have pleaded well, and I certainly see the acts of the brave Confederate officer in a different light from what I did."

"I felt that he was no ordinary man, and yet I do not feel that I can take the responsibility of a pardon—but here comes Major Granger, and I wish to hear his story," and as the general spoke the major entered his quarters.

CHAPTER XXIV.

UNDER A CLOUD.

WHEN Major Godfrey Granger was sent for to come at once to headquarters, he was found with a gay party of young officers, and he arose with the air of a man who felt that he was needed, that there was some important work on hand for him to do.

He had an expression upon his face which might be interpreted:

"You see the general cannot get along without me."

He even entered headquarters with the same self-important air; but the moment he saw the general's stern face and beheld Buffalo Bill present, he had a feeling that something was wrong.

"You sent for me, general, and I came as promptly as I could, sir," he said.

"Oh, yes, you are prompt enough, Major Granger; but I sent for you in regard to an explanation I desire to hear from you."

"I will gladly explain anything that I can, sir," and the officer cast a quick glance at Buffalo Bill, as though he felt that he was the cause for the demand for the explanation wanted.

"You informed me that you had been saved, when recognized in the Confederate lines, by an old friend?"

"Yes, sir."

"You admitted to me that this friend knew you, but denied the knowledge to save you?"

"Yes, general."

"Who was that friend?"

"A Confederate officer, sir."

"What was his name?"

"Cecil Seldon, sir."

"The man who is now a condemned spy in our lines?"

"Yes, sir."

"You admit this, and yet you made no effort to palliate his offense to me?"

"I felt that he had done wrong in trusting himself here, sir, in our lines, feeling that, if recognized, he could rely upon me to save him, and so a sense of duty prompted me to admit the truth, though of course I could not but feel that he had served me well."

"Of course not, Major Granger; but having done your duty in recognizing him, would it not have been well for your own conscience had you pleaded that he might be spared?"

"I felt, sir, that pleading for a spy's life was vain."

"That was your opinion?"

"Yes, general."

"Why not make known the facts, then, of what he had done for you, and ask at least that he might have a soldier's death allowed him—be shot, and not hanged?"

"I did not think of that, sir."

"You were Captain Seldon's classmate at West Point, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"You were friends then?"

"We were, sir."

"And before you went to the Military Academy you were friends?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is he the young cadet who saved General Layton and his daughter from drowning?"

"Yes, sir, with my aid."

"How did you aid?"

"I ran for a boat, sir, and rowed out to the capsized yacht."

"How did Cadet Seldon get there?"

"He swam out."

"Ah! and I believe you are indebted to the same man for other services rendered?"

The major bowed, and cast an ugly glance toward Buffalo Bill.

"Well, Major Granger, I have to say that I cannot accuse you of any real act of official wrong, for you did do your duty; but I feel sure that you had some secret motive for your failure to protect Captain Seldon, or even to plead for him; and to thus allow him to go to the gallows without one word from you in his behalf, places you under a cloud which it will cause much to dissipate from my mind."

"I am indeed most sorry, general, to have you speak thus, sir, and—"

"I have more to say, sir."

"Pardon me, general."

"As I do not care to have any officer attached to my military family who could thus desert a friend, Rebel though he may be, spy also, I desire to have you hand in your resignation as a staff officer, and with it the request to be transferred to the army in Virginia."

"Oh, general, this will harm me—"

"Not so much as your remaining here will do, and the story becoming known, for as it will stand upon your departure it will be kept secret I promise you."

"I thank you, sir, for this concession, but will that man not make capital against me with what he has heard of the position in which I am placed?"

"You refer to my friend here, Mr. Cody?"

was the general's stern rebuke.

"Pardon me, sir, yes, to Mr. Cody."

"Mr. Cody will say nothing of the conversation he has just heard, while, let me say to you now, that it is his pleading for that brave Rebel Seldon, that prevents his dying at sunset to-morrow, for I shall, under the circumstances, pardon him for entering the lines as a spy, and send him simply to the North as a prisoner of war."

"I shall expect your resignation as my staff officer early to-morrow, Major Granger, accompanied by the request to be ordered to the army of Virginia," and the general's bow dismissed the officer, who left headquarters with a feeling that he was indeed under a cloud.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE ALARM.

WHETHER Major Granger felt in his heart the real sin of his act toward Cecil Seldon, or not, was with his own conscience; but he had certainly been given reason to understand that the general condemned him severely.

Of course he had really done no wrong in an official way—instead, it was his duty; but then there was an implied act of basest treachery toward one who had been his friend, and he had not said one word to palliate his offense, hence he had grievously sinned against the man he should have saved, or risked his life to aid.

It was therefore with a very different bearing, from what he entered with, that he left the headquarters, the sentinel even taking notice of that fact.

He was angry with himself and with the general, but particularly furious with Buffalo Bill, while he felt in a very vicious humor toward Lieutenant Armes, at whose door he laid the cause of his downfall, for he could call it nothing else.

It was true that he would still retain his rank, yet the blow had fallen upon him, as he was ambitious and had already laid his plans for promotion.

He was a favorite with the general, and popular with his brother officers, while he had a brilliant record.

Did it become known just what he had done he well knew that it would hurt him, for there were many gallant, honorable men in the army who would not be in his place for any consideration, who would have risked life, everything to have saved the brave man, had he befriended them.

Then his going from that department would not be understood he felt sure.

Still there was no help for it and he must accept the situation as best he could, and put a bold face upon his departure, except in the presence of the general.

He was a bold schemer, and so he began at once to act, for he returned to the party from whose presence he had been called.

His *debonair* manner had left him however, and he did not look as though he still thought the general could not do without him.

He had had convincing proof that he could.

So he said, after his return:

"Gentlemen, I have had news to night of a nature which is going to take me away from you."

"Not soon, Granger?"

"Yes, at once."

"What! in the face of battle?"

"I will have to go to-morrow, I fear."

"Nothing in the way of a family affliction, I trust, major?" said one.

"No, and yet I can only say that I am wanted in Virginia."

"Ah! you'll see more pleasant service there than in these wild mountains, major, and I almost envy you."

"Ten to one he is going to be promoted."

"You are a lucky dog, Granger."

The major said nothing to this, but smiled mysteriously, as though the speaker had hit the nail on the head, and his silence was accepted as a fact that he was to be promoted.

Soon after he bade good-night to his comrades and went to his quarters.

There he sat down to his camp table and wrote his resignation as an officer on the general's staff, and next made the written request to be transferred to the Virginia army.

This done he called his negro servant and told him to call him at dawn, and at once begin to pack up his traps for a departure northward.

This done the major sought his cot, but not to sleep.

Slumber would not come to his eyelids, for he began to dread exposure, that the story would leak out that he had been requested to leave the staff, and on account of his conduct toward a Rebel officer who had been his friend and served him well.

"The general said it should remain a secret, but I am sure Buffalo Bill will not keep it."

"If he does, Lieutenant Armes must know about it, after sending for me and making the request that he did, and he will tell it, for he is under no pledge to the general to do so."

"I do feel that I acted wrong toward Seldon, but then all is fair in love and war it is said, and I have too much at stake to have done otherwise."

"And yet he is to go free, yes, to be sent North to prison."

"My God! suppose she should hear of it, and know that he is alive after the Southern paper I sent her containing a notice of his death, failing at the head of his company while leading a forlorn hope."

"And why was he spared, I wonder, when every officer of his company and two-thirds of his men were wiped out?"

"She certainly has never seen the report of his death contradicted, and, I trust she will not, at least for some time to come."

"Yes, it is best that I go to Virginia after all, and I shall accept the position before offered me, on General Layton's staff, for then I will be near her father who is my friend."

"Yes, after all, it will be the best thing I can do to be ordered to report to the army in Virginia, for then I can play my cards well— Oh! what is that row about?"

"The long roll is sounding, and the Rebels must be advancing."

"Ho, sergeant, what is the trouble?" and the major hailed a sergeant who passed his tent just then.

"The Rebel spy has escaped, sir," came the startling response of the sergeant.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE STORY RETOLD.

WHEN Major Granger left headquarters, the general sprang to his feet and paced to and fro for a moment, while Buffalo Bill awaited his pleasure, standing ready to depart.

Suddenly the general turned and said:

"Now there goes a splendid officer, a daring soldier and a brilliant man."

"It is hard to expect perfection in a man, Cody, yet why could not a man such as Godfrey Granger is, be above petty vices, mean actions, for it was disreputable in him to be willing to sacrifice a noble fellow, as this Rebel appears to be, from some motive of his own, either to win a woman's love, the hope of gain, or revenge, all of which he should be above being underhand in seeking."

"There is some secret beneath all this, and the lesson he has received I hope will benefit Major Granger, for I like him and intended doing all I could to advance him."

"I am weak myself, in many things, but I would rather die than be guilty of a mean action, and from what I have heard of you, Buffalo Bill, I believe you are of the same way of thinking."

The scout bowed, and the general went on to say:

"To-morrow morning, Buffalo Bill, I wish you to go to Lieutenant Armes and tell him that his friend the Rebel spy, is not to be executed, but held as a prisoner of war, and after guard mount you will visit Captain Seldon in his prison and say to him that, in consideration of his noble conduct toward Major Granger, Lieutenant Armes and yourself, he is to be pardoned, and treated as a prisoner of war, while I will see that he is exchanged at as early a date as possible."

"I thank you, general, and I will report the good news to Lieutenant Armes to-night, sir, for he is anxiously awaiting your decision."

"Do so, and present my compliments to him and wishes for a speedy recovery," and the general held out his hand to Buffalo Bill in parting.

The scout left headquarters and was making his way toward the quarters of Lieutenant Armes, when he saw two soldiers coming from the cabin where the prisoner was confined.

They hesitated as they saw the scout, and then passed on, turning their heads away.

One was an officer, the other a soldier, and Buffalo Bill muttered to himself:

"For some reason they do not wish to be seen."

"I will see which way they go."

He watched them until he saw them go up to the first sentinel, halt an instant and then pass on, when he said:

"They have the countersign, and I guess mistook me for some one they did not wish to see."

So on to the quarters of the lieutenant went Buffalo Bill, and the sentinel on duty there readily admitted him.

A dim light burned in the room, but the lieutenant was awake and said quickly:

"Come in, Cody, for I am anxiously awaiting you."

"I fear you have had no rest, Lieutenant Armes, but I have good news for you, sir."

"Then I need no rest, as that compensates."

"You have seen the general?"

"I have, sir, and the Rebel captain is to be treated as a prisoner of war."

"Thank Heaven for that."

"The general sent his compliments, sir, and wishes for your speedy recovery."

"Thank you; but now tell me all about it."

"Had I not better come in to-morrow and tell you, sir, now that you know all is well with the prisoner?"

"No indeed, for I will sleep well once I have heard all that was said and done."

"Well, lieutenant, I did not see the general until nine o'clock, but he had had supper, and was smoking his cigar, so I found him in good humor."

"I told him that I came from you, and in my own behalf, and made known to him the whole career of the Rebel captain."

"You told him of Granger?"

"Yes, sir, I said as little as possible to cast any blame upon the major, but when I spoke of his doubtless having made known to the general that his life was saved by Captain Seldon, I saw that he had not been told who his prisoner was."

"The general at once sent an orderly for the major, and I would not wish to receive the quiet rebuke he got," and as Lieutenant Armes would not miss a word of all that was said, Buffalo Bill went through the whole affair from beginning to end.

"I feel sorry for Granger, but he brought the rebuke upon himself, though of course he censures me."

"I think he must, sir, and myself as well, after my talk with him this afternoon; but I am indifferent as to what he thinks or does— Ah! what trouble is that?" and as the long roll sounded Buffalo Bill dashed from the room to know the cause of the alarm.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE ESCAPE.

BUFFALO BILL was not very long in finding out the cause of the alarm, and, aware that Lieutenant Armes would be anxious to know what it was, he returned at once to his quarters.

"Well, Cody, what is it?" asked the lieutenant, as soon as he saw the scout re enter his room.

"The prisoner has escaped, sir."
 "What!"
 "He has escaped."
 "Seldon?"
 "Yes, sir, the Rebel captain."
 "Impossible!"
 "It is true, sir."
 "But you are sure?"
 "I went to his cabin, sir, and the officer of the day was there, and a number of others besides."
 "And he was gone?"
 "Yes, sir, his manacles lay upon his table, and the key was left in them, but the door was locked on the outside."
 "How could he get out?"
 "The sentinel was missing."
 "Ah! he bribed him."
 "The relief guard on its rounds, sir, found no sentinel on duty, so a light was flashed into the cabin and it was seen to be empty."
 "Then the alarm was given and it was discovered that the sentinel and the prisoner were both gone."
 "Who was the sentinel?"
 "The officer of the day said that he was from this part of Tennessee and doubtless knew Captain Seldon and would not see him die."
 "To save him he therefore deserted and went with him."
 "That is just it, and I am more than glad that Seldon has gone."
 "As I am, sir."
 "But I met these two men, Lieutenant Ames."
 "You did?"
 "Yes, sir."
 "When?"
 "To-night, sir, when I was coming here from the general's quarters."
 "How do you know?"
 "I saw two soldiers coming from toward the prisoner's cabin, and they hesitated as they saw me, but came on, though they turned their heads away."
 "One was an officer, the other a soldier, as I believed, and I watched them until they passed the first sentinel, and then came on here, confident that they wished to avoid being seen."
 "The sentinel said that he thought he knew the soldier, but did not know the officer, and that the latter gave the countersign all right."
 "There is no doubt but that they were the sentinel and captain Seldon, and the latter's escape will cause a complete change in the general's plans, for he had heard all that was said at the council of the officers."
 "That settles it then, sir; but I may be needed, so will go on to my quarters," and Buffalo Bill went rapidly to his own camp, where he arrived just as a courier dashed up with orders for him to report to the general immediately.
 This the scout did, and he found the headquarters couriers all mounted and awaiting orders, and half a hundred officers gathered about the general's tent.
 After a short consultation with his generals, the commander of the army dispatched staff officers to the different commands, countermanding all orders for a move upon the following day, and to have the entire line stand on the defensive until further instructions.
 "Well, Buffalo Bill, it seems that your friend the Rebel captain, having no knowledge of our kind intentions toward him, decamped, and carried one of our soldiers with him," said the general as Buffalo Bill approached.
 "Yes, sir, I learned of his escape, and I believe I met the Rebel captain and the sentinel when I was going from your quarters," and Buffalo Bill told of his meeting with the two men coming from the direction of the prisoner's cabin.
 "As you saw them pass the sentry with the countersign, I do not censure you for not following them further; but as I recall your wonderful powers as a trailer, Cody, I wish you to see what you can discover for me as to the way they went, and if others left our line with the Rebel captain besides the sentinel."
 "I will do my best, sir," and Buffalo Bill departed upon his mission.
 He made his way on horseback from sentry to sentry, which the Confederate officer and the deserter had passed, until at last he reached the outer line of sentinels.
 Then he continued on to the picket line and discovered that the two men had passed there, the officer stating that he was upon his rounds of inspection and passing on without giving the slightest cause for suspicion.
 "Now to wait until daylight and then strike their trail and see just where they entered the Confederate lines," said Buffalo Bill, and dismounting, he staked out his horse, spread his blankets, and lay down to sleep through the remaining hours of darkness.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE TWO HEROES IN BUCKSKIN.

THE dawn found Buffalo Bill eating his breakfast of cold bacon and crackers, washed down by a drink of spring water, after which he was ready to pick up the trail of the fugitives with the first glimmer of light.
 He walked, his horse faithfully following, and he traced the footprints of the two men where a less skillful trailer could not have done so.

Down the valley he went, proceeding with the greatest caution, for he knew well that he was in great danger, penetrating the "dark and bloody ground" between the two armies.
 He was in his element, however, as a scout, and continued on down the valley, across a small stream which they had waded, and then on up the path leading to the ridge beyond.
 "If the Confederates have out any scouts, then there is the place for them on that ridge," he said, gazing up the mountain-side.
 "There is the trail of the two fugitives, and it leads over the ridge."
 "But dare I follow it further?"
 "It seems awfully quiet, and as though no one was about, but I have seen just such quiet when a band of red-skins were lying in ambush."
 "Let me see!"
 "Yes, the birds are singing down here in the valley, but I do not see a single bird up yonder, or hear one, and that looks as though there were men about, to frighten them."
 "I guess I better not go over that ridge, for it looks like trouble ahead, and that is the way the Rebel captain and the deserter went."
 "Well, I'll mount my horse and venture a little further, though I'm betting big money to nothing that I'll have a race with bullets coming back."
 Then Buffalo Bill mounted, and holding his reins well in hand, and a revolver in his right, he rode slowly up the path.
 There was a cliff of rocks on one side, and a huge boulder on the other; between these he had to pass, when, suddenly, there was heard a whirling sound, as though made by the wings of many birds, and then over the shoulders of Buffalo Bill and the head of his horse, settled half-a-dozen coils, the deadly noose of the Texas Lasso-Throwers.
 Buffalo Bill, though on his guard against a shot, was taken by surprise at the mode of attack upon him.
 Yet he made a bold effort to get free, driving his spurs into the flanks of his horse as the frightened animal wheeled and tried to escape, like a fly from a spider's web.
 The revolver of the scout had been knocked from his hand by the sudden pull of the lassoes, and both horse and rider were ensnared beyond possibility of escape.
 "Hold, pard! Don't make us use lead as well as rope to stop you!" cried a voice, and a handsome, dashing-looking man in the dress of a Texas Ranger sprang from behind the boulder and advanced toward the Union scout.
 "I'm caught fairly, pard, and you need not drive the fact into my head with a bullet, for I know it," returned Buffalo Bill in his off-hand way, as he gazed at the man who had him at his mercy with both curiosity and admiration in his glance, while the latter said, as he disarmed him:
 "Let up on your ropes, boys, for he's safe now."
 The five lariats—three over the form of Buffalo Bill, and two about the neck of his horse—were at once slackened, and the Throwers came in sight from behind the wall of rock and the boulder.
 They were dressed, as was the leader, in sombreros, gray in color, and looped up with a gold five-point star, buckskin leggings stuck in top-boots, the latter armed with heavy spurs, a gray jacket and a sash about their waists.
 They were a darkly-bronzed, hardy looking set of men, with faces full of daring and determination.
 All gazed at Buffalo Bill with undisguised admiration in their looks, but his eyes were riveted upon their leader, who had just disarmed him, and who now said:
 "See here, pard, you and I have met before."
 "That is just what I was thinking, sir. You are a Texan?" answered Buffalo Bill.
 "Yes, a Texas Ranger, one of a score attached to Captain Seldon's Mounted Minute Men, and you are in the Union Army?"
 "I am, and a scout there, though I am from the frontier."
 "I knew it, and I can call your name, I'll wager my spurs against your liberty."
 "I'll take the bet," was the quick response.
 "You are Buffalo Bill, the King of Scouts."
 "I have lost, for I am Buffalo Bill, and I now believe that I have placed you, pard."
 "Call me!"
 "You are Texas Jack!"
 "Right you are, and here's my hand on it, pard!" and the hands of the two heroes of the border were clasped as though they had been life-long friends.

CHAPTER XXIX.

TRUE TO A PARD OF THE PLAINS.

THE grasp of the two men was warm and sincere, though each fought under a different flag.
 From one end of Texas to the other the name of Buffalo Bill was well known as the king of plainsmen, and though all present were his foes, yet as a comrade in buckskin he was their pard.
 On the other hand Buffalo Bill had heard of Texas Jack as a ranger and Indian-fighter, and on one occasion the two had met.

How it was, Texas Jack's own words will explain, for he said:

"Yes, you are a brother Mason, too, I discover, pard, so I have another claim upon you; but, pard, I want my comrades to know you," and turning to his men Texas Jack, the Confederate ranger scout continued:

"Boys, this is Buffalo Bill, the great scout of the border of whom we have talked around many a camp-fire, and I am going to tell you a little story which I know to be true about him."

"It was upon the borders of New Mexico, a year ago, when a party I was guiding to Santa Fe got corraled by a band of Comanches, and they had us in a mighty close place."

"In fact, our hair was dead sure to hang on their belts before morning, for they were twenty to one against us, as we were only six in number, and our ammunition had run low, as they had us corraled for over thirty hours, without water or food."

"Suddenly, as the red-skins were preparing to rush upon us, we heard the cheering notes of a bugle, and then came the cheering of United States Cavalry as they charged into the camp of the Indians."

"Well, it was short, sharp work of it, and then we found that the company of cavalry had been scouting some thirty miles away, but Buffalo Bill, who was their guide, had followed the red-skin trail alone."

"He found that the red-skins had corraled us, and so he rode with full speed, got the cavalry and brought them to our aid in the very minute of time."

"Well, that was when I met Buffalo Bill, and it was night-time then, so I only got a short look at him, as the cavalry went on in chase of the Indians."

"But he saved my hair then, and if he is on the other side in this war, we stand pards for life, and don't you forget it."

"Now, pard, you are just as free to go as if you had never struck us, and Texas Jack says so."

Buffalo Bill had sat upon his horse in an embarrassed sort of way, while Texas Jack was raving his praises, for he hardly knew what to say or do.

But when the Texan had said that he was free, he held forth his hand and said:

"Yes, Texas Jack, pards for life will we be, even though now under different flags, and let me tell you, and your comrades, that this war will not last always, so when it ends come my way, to the plains of the Wild West, and you'll find a firm friend in Buffalo Bill."

"I know it," firmly responded Texas Jack, and then he continued rapidly:

"But though I would like to have you share our bacon and hard-tack, I must not let you stay here, as some officer who thinks he knows it all, may come along and cause trouble, though our captain would not say a word, for he is square as they make men nowadays."

"And who is your captain, may I ask?"

"Captain Cecil Seldon, commander of three companies of scouts, Texans, Tennesseans and Mississippians, and known as the Mounted Minute men."

"I know him as a brave and gallant officer; but did he not pass here a short while since, coming from our lines?"

"He did."

"There was another with him?"

"Yes, and the captain told us he might be pursued, and to keep an eye open, and so we saw you coming, and got ready for you."

"And roped me in in great shape; but I wish you to say to your captain, and to the man with him, to be careful not to fall a prisoner into the hands of the Northern troops, for it means certain death to them."

"Because the captain is such a daring raider, I suppose?"

"Because he has shown himself to be too daring a man; but he will understand if you tell him that Buffalo Bill told you to say to him not to be captured, and to let his comrade of last night comprehend the same thing."

The Texans all round shook hands with the Northern scout, and Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack thus parted, to meet again years after upon the plains, when they did indeed become pards for life.

CHAPTER XXX.

DETERMINED TO WIN.

WITH the movements of the Northern and Southern armies this story has nothing to do, only with actors in each of them and their lives, so, leaving to the historians of the war the telling of the games of checkmate played by the generals, in the struggle for victory, I will follow the fortunes of those few who have already figured in these pages in which there is more of reality than fiction.

Texas Jack told Captain Seldon the message sent him by Buffalo Bill, and just how he had captured the noted scout and let him go free.

The Confederate captain understood well what the warning meant, yet made no comment, and went on in his fight for fame as a soldier with the same daring energy that had always been characteristic of his nature.

The escape of the Confederate spy had disarranged completely the plans of the Union general, and so both armies had to rest upon their arms until some other strategic move could be planned.

Major Godfrey Granger took his departure from the army, and was glad to get out of range of the stern eye of the general he had offended.

When he returned to camp Buffalo Bill had reported to the general how he had tracked the two fugitives to the Confederate lines, but he kept to himself how he had been made a prisoner and set free.

But to Lieutenant Armes he made known the secret, and the two talked long and earnestly over the circumstance.

It was not very long after that Lieutenant Armes was able to report for duty, and he was promoted for gallantry and ordered to do duty on the staff of General W. S. Hancock in Virginia.*

The Indian troubles on the the frontier increasing orders came for Buffalo Bill to return to his old post of duty, and thus were the three persons we are most interested in who wore the blue, taken from the army confronting the Confederates in Tennessee, though each one of them are again to cross our trails in this story of still living heroes of thrilling adventure and strange romance.

When he departed from the Tennessee Army, Major Godfrey Granger reported at once to the commanding general of the Federal forces in Virginia, and his record enabled him to have his request granted to report to General Layton as he showed a letter from that officer making the offer to him of chief *aide-de-camp* on his staff.

Entering General Layton's quarters one morning he found himself most cordially welcomed, and was at once given the position desired, after which he was given a couple of weeks leave before reporting for duty.

This leave he determined to spend in New York, and he carried a letter from General Layton to his daughter, which was as follows:

"MY DEAR LOUISE:—

"I have appointed Major Godfrey Granger chief *aide* on my staff, and he returns for duty after a leave of a couple of weeks which he proposes to spend in New York, for he has asked me for the privilege of paying attention to you with a view to gaining your love, and I readily consent, for there is no more gallant officer in our service, or one whose prospects are more promising.

"Of course I know that your affections were first given to the gallant fellow who went with the South in this bitter struggle and so soon found an untimely grave; but that is past, and Granger also did much to rescue us that nearly fatal day. He was Seldon's devoted friend, and he is now serving under our country's flag, and I give him my warmest wishes for his success in winning your heart and hand.

"I trust upon his return he can tell me that you are pledged to become his wife."

Such was the letter written to Louise Layton by her father, who had become a division commander in the Union Army, and was winning fame as a skillful general.

With such a letter Godfrey Granger did not anticipate much trouble in winning the woman he loved, and whom he had often met since he was a cadet at West Point.

She had seen him graduate with the first honors of his class, had heard often of his distinguished courage on the field, and had been glad to know, as her friend, that he was being promoted rapidly, already holding high rank, though still a very young man.

She had read his letters from the field with the deepest of interest, for they were most entertaining, and he had sent her many souvenirs of battle which she prized most highly.

It was also Godfrey Granger who had sent to her the notice of the death of the man she loved, Cecil Conrad, that had appeared in a Southern paper, but which the reader knows to have been a false report.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE ARRIVAL.

THERE was no doubt but that the report of Captain Seldon's death had appeared in the newspapers, and with it a most flattering notice of how he had led a charge in a forlorn hope, and been killed just as he had won the fight.

But his horse had been killed under him, his men had fallen about him, and bruised and slightly wounded he had gone down, supposed to have been slain.

That night however he had reappeared badly used up, yet not severely injured, and a few days after he was at the head of his command again.

It was the report of this affair which had been sent to Louise Layton by Major Godfrey Granger, and with it a letter bemoaning the sad end of his old friend and cadet comrade who had given up the brightest hopes to follow the for-

* Colonel George A. Armes, now a resident of Washington City, became one of the most noted Indian-fighters in the army, after having served through the Civil War with great distinction, for in each instance he was promoted for conspicuous daring in the field.—THE AUTHOR.

tunes of the Bonnie Blue Flag of the Boys in Gray.

The effect of that notice and letter upon Louise Layton Major Granger could only guess, for he knew of her love for the Confederate captain and secret engagement to him.

Soon after he received a letter from her thanking him for all his kindness to her and yet with but one sad comment regarding the fate of Cecil Seldon.

But the paper and envelope were rimmed with black and that told most pathetically to him how deeply her heart was in mourning.

From that day the letters of Godfrey Granger became more frequent and he never lost an opportunity to send a souvenir of some kind to the woman he loved and had vowed in his own heart to win.

But when he learned, a month after the reported killing of Cecil Seldon, that it was a false report, he took good care to make no mention of the fact in his letter to Louise Layton.

She believed him dead and so let her continue in that belief.

She might not hear to the contrary during the war, for the arrangement between them had been that they would not write to each other.

As he was a Confederate, holding no exalted rank, it would only be by an accident that she would know that he had not been killed, and hence Godfrey Granger felt safe in a measure in not telling her that the rumor of her Rebel lover's death was a false one.

Now that he had gotten his position upon her father's staff, his permission also to offer her his heart and hand, and armed with a strong letter from the general to his daughter, urging that she accept the gallant young officer, he felt that he indeed held the winning hand in the game he was to play in which love and a fortune were at stake.

He went on to New York in the best of spirits, and he sought an immediate opportunity of presenting himself at the country home of General Layton on the Hudson, which Louise would make her abiding place, keeping her elegant home in the city closed.

With her father in daily danger of meeting a soldier's death, and her lover supposed to be dead, Louise Layton had no heart for the gayeties of the city, and so went to the pretty country seat which she had inherited from her old maid aunt, and where she lived quietly with the old family servants, and for a companion and chaperon, a poor kinswoman whose husband had been killed in one of the first battles fought in the war.

It was to this pretty little home, Solace Hall, as it had been named, that Major Godfrey Granger went to seek Louise Layton, having notified her by letter of his coming.

Half a year had passed since the news had reached her of the death of her Rebel lover, and not a word had she heard since that he was still alive and battling honestly in the Southern army.

The Hudson River boat touched at a wharf a mile from Solace Hall, and thither Louise drove in her carriage to meet her visitor.

She looked very beautiful in her dress of black, for though she had not gone into mourning, she had worn no colors for half a year, dressing in most somber style.

The boat landed, and the tall, splendid form of Major Godfrey Granger was seen coming along the wharf, his erect carriage and military step causing him to stand out in bold relief amid the crowd.

He was in a new uniform, and as he came along was looking ahead to see if he had been honored by Louise Layton's coming for him.

His eyes soon caught sight of her carriage, and in another moment he had grasped her hand and was bending low in most respectful salutation.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE OFFER.

SOLACE HALL was a charming home, looking out from a glen upon the river, and with beautiful grounds about it.

There was comfort within doors, and beauty without, all making up a restful, delightful home, with carriages and horses at command, the best of trained servants, a library and all to make life pass pleasantly away.

The dear old lady who had found a home there was just the one to have preside over all, and it would seem that perfect happiness could fall upon a dweller there.

But "Aunt Mabel," as Louise Layton called her kinswoman, had had her sorrows, for first her fortune had been swept away, and then husband and son had fallen in battle.

And Louise, too, had suffered, for, as she believed, the love of her life had gone down into the grave.

Yet she was not one to force her sorrows upon others, and she tried to make life pass serenely along.

Major Godfrey Granger was delighted with Solace Hall.

The room assigned to him was a delightful

one, a servant stood ready to act as his valet, liquors and cigars were upon the sideboard at his will, and when ushered in to dinner he had to admit that he had never sat down to a more delightfully-served meal.

After dinner there was a drive, with music in, the evening and when he retired that night, Godfrey Granger had placed in the hands of Louise the letter her father had sent her by him.

The next morning it was a cup of coffee and a horseback ride with Louise, and he felt that he must at once speak his mind, so, as they rode along the highway bordering the river, he said:

"Miss Louise, I asked for a leave of a couple of weeks that I might come on to New York and see you.

"What I have to tell let me say now, for the suspense of not knowing my fate at your hands is hard for me to bear.

"I am aware that there existed between you and my dear friend of long syne days, an engagement, and I do not wonder that you loved Cecil Seldon as devotedly as he did you, for he was all that a man could be.

"But he chose to go with the South in this war, while I elected to remain in the army in which I had been reared.

"He has met his fate, and a glorious one, dying in leading a splendid charge, and winning a name that will long be remembered.

"With Seldon yet alive, though my love for you began when his did, I would keep the secret of my regard for you forever.

"But, with his passing away it left me free to declare myself, to tell you that my whole heart and life have become wrapped up in you, and I beg for your love in return, entreat that I may claim your hand now that time has healed your wounded affection, and though I well know that I can never hope to win the deep devotion he could have inspired, I yet shall seek to deserve your respect, command your regard and do all in my power to make your life a happy one."

They were riding slowly along as the officer made his avowal of love, and the face of Louise Layton was full of sadness as she listened.

Her thoughts went back to her hero, her Rebel lover, and had Major Granger demanded her devotion entire, he would have antagonized her at once.

But the coming man knew just how to play his cards, and through all he had made himself secondary to Cecil Seldon.

It was this that gave him strength, and holding out her gloved hand Louise Layton said in her sweet way, while tears came into her beautiful eyes, called up by bygone memories:

"Major Granger, as you have justly said, the first love of my life is buried in the grave with Cecil Seldon.

"You were his friend and know how easy it was to love such a man.

"I was engaged to him and my pledge, as his was, let me say, was until death did us part.

"Death has parted us, and you are free to offer your regard as his friend, and I suppose it must be my fate to wed.

"My father regards you most highly, and it is his wish that I accept your proffered love, and your hand.

"Outside of his wishes, however, let me say that I esteem you most highly, you have been a warm friend, and I will promise to become your wife, and if you will bear with me, in time I will, I am sure, be won away from the memories of the dead in my devotion to the living.

"Will you take me on such terms?"

"With all my heart and soul," was the earnest response of Godfrey Granger, and when they returned to breakfast half an hour later Aunt Mabel was told that Louise Layton had promised to become the wife of her father's handsome *aide-de-camp*.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

VISITORS AT SOLACE HALL.

AFTER a week's delightful stay at Solace Hall, Major Granger returned to the front.

He arrived just in time to be present at a great battle that was fought, and by his conspicuous gallantry he rallied a demoralized body of troopers that were falling rapidly back.

Though twice wounded he kept the field, and had three horses shot under him, so that when night came on his courage was upon every tongue, and both he and General Layton were ordered to the rear.

The general had also received a wound, which, though not serious, was sufficient to keep him from duty for some time.

After a few weeks' stay in the hospital Major Granger received his promotion to a lieutenant-colonelcy, and in writing to Louise Layton of his good fortune, begged her, as he should return to the front again in a few weeks, to name the day when she would become his wife and make him a happy man.

Louise was inclined to put off her marriage until the end of the war, but her father urged that it would still continue for years, and Aunt Mabel also had a good word to say for the daring officer, who sought to make the beauty and the heiress his wife.

With this pressure upon her, and firmly believing that Cecil Seldon was dead, Louise Layton consented to a speedy marriage, and named a day just two weeks off.

Upon the appointed day, accompanied by a brother officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Granger went up to Solace Hall and Louise Layton became his wife.

They took a short tour to Niagara Falls, returned via Saratoga Springs, and then while her husband went once more to the front, Louise returned to Solace Hall and settled down to a life of quietude and anxiety, for how could it be otherwise with two so near to her again facing death daily at the front.

Thus a year passed away and Louise found happiness in a little miniature likeness of herself, a baby girl, upon whom she lavished the whole of her love and devotion.

Her father had lost an arm, and been retired from service, and her husband, with the rank of colonel, was still in the field, but had been ordered to duty in the West, so that she did not see much of him.

One afternoon, when she was seated on the piazza, watching the nurse riding little Louise about in the baby-carriage, a vehicle turned into the driveway from the road, and drove rapidly up to the mansion.

In the carriage were three persons, a lady and two gentlemen, one of the latter being in uniform.

As they alighted Louise welcomed them most cordially, for the lady was Ethel Enders, one of the gentlemen her brother, Eugene, who had not allowed his patriotism to overcome his discretion, so had not gone into the army, while the other of the three in the carriage was Captain George Armes, and wearing his arm in a sling, for he was just from the front, where he had been wounded a second time, a circumstance which had made him a captain, with the brevet rank "for distinguished services in battle," of a major.

Ethel Enders was as beautiful as ever, though her face wore a more softened look now, and there appeared to be an expression in it of sadness, as though some fond dream of her life had been broken.

Her brother was the same blase fellow as before, and having run through with the greater part of his fortune, left him at his father's death, a year and a half before, he economized by spending every other month with his sister, at Villa Enders, allowing her to foot all the bills, and merely getting her to pay some of his smaller debts upon each visit to her.

Captain Armes having met him in New York, and known him in the past, the young officer had been invited up to Villa Enders, to spend a couple of weeks, and a few days after his arrival there a visit to Mrs. Godfrey Granger was suggested by Ethel.

It was a drive of some fifteen miles down to Solace Hall from Villa Enders, but they would remain all night, and return the following day, for they would be welcome, Ethel was very sure.

Then, too, Ethel Enders had heard from Captain Armes that which she was anxious that Louise should know, and the nature of which perhaps the reader has already guessed, for what she had heard had been a surprise—a shock even to her.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

TOO LATE.

LOUISE was delighted to meet her old friends, for, now that she was married, she no longer dreaded any love-making from Eugene Enders.

Then, too, she half-suspected that Ethel, like herself, had had to mourn a lost love in the supposed death of Cecil Seldon.

As for Captain Armes, she had liked him from the first, and was most glad to see him again, for she had read again and again of his gallant record.

The general, with his empty sleeve, also greeted the visitors most cordially, the carriage was sent to the stables, and they were told that they should, under no circumstances, be allowed to return home before the following day.

So they were glad to resign themselves to their fate, it being such a pleasant one.

After dinner Eugene Enders lingered over the wine and cigars with the general, Ethel Enders went for a stroll in the flower-gardens with Aunt Mabel, and Captain Armes accepted Louise's offer to give him a row upon the river.

She hauled the oars well, and as they were floating upon the waters, gazing at the setting sun, Captain Armes said, as though the thought had just occurred to him:

"You remember Cadet Cecil Seldon, Mrs. Granger, do you not?"

Louise started visibly, while she said in a low tone:

"Could I ever forget one, Captain Armes, to whom I owe my life?"

"I remember well the circumstance now, and what a gallant fellow he was.

"He espoused the cause of the South and has been the same noble, brave fellow through all, winning his way up rapidly, and in each in-

stance being promoted for most conspicuous gallantry on the field."

"Yes, he was a captain when he was killed, I believe."

"When he was killed, Mrs. Granger?" asked Captain Armes in surprise.

"Yes, he was killed the first year of the war, leading a forlorn hope."

"Yes, I recall that he was wounded, and was reported among the slain, and the report went the rounds of the Southern papers; but Cecil Seldon is not dead, Mrs. Granger."

The oars dropped from the nerveless hands of Louise Granger, and her face turned to the hue of death.

She essayed to speak, but could not for nearly a minute, and Captain Armes said quickly:

"Are you ill, Mrs. Granger?"

"Have I said anything to pain you?"

She made an effort at composure, resumed the trailing oars again and said:

"Captain Armes, do you know that Captain Seldon is not dead?"

"Yes, indeed, for it was after his reported death that he served Buffalo Bill and myself so nobly."

"Did not your husband tell you that he was not dead, Mrs. Granger?"

"No, for Colonel Granger believed that he was, and he it was who sent me the Southern paper containing the report of Captain Seldon's falling at the head of his men."

"Yes, such was the report."

"And it was not true?" faltered Louise.

"Not a bit of it!"

"You are sure?"

"Perfectly, for he has been promoted, as I said, and see, here is a notice of him I clipped from a Southern paper I got from a Rebel prisoner a few weeks ago."

"Will you read it?"

But the beautiful eyes were too full of tears, the voice too tremulous for Louise to read a line, so she said in a low tone:

"Will you read it, please?"

He unfolded the slip of paper and said:

"This is from the Vicksburg Herald, and says:

"In the battle at Chickasaw Bluffs, the officer most conspicuous for gallantry on the field was Colonel Cecil Seldon, who seized the colors of a Mississippi regiment and led them in a charge against a brigade of Federal infantry that were rushing up the hill in grand style to capture a battery of Withers's artillery, and which would have been taken but for this dashing counter-charge of Colonel Seldon, which drove the enemy back to the shelter of their gunboats upon the Yazoo."

"General Stephen D. Lee asserted upon the field, for he witnessed the splendid act, that Lieutenant-Colonel Seldon should wear another star upon his collar for his conspicuous courage and splendid service rendered, and we predict that it will not be long, young as he is, before the wreath of a brigadier will also adorn the same collar, and most deservedly so."

The captain paused and yet Louise made no comment.

She had ceased rowing, but her hands were grasping the oars with a tension that was surprising, and her even rows of pearly-white teeth were set hard together.

"Splendid old fellow, I knew he must make a name for himself, and I must tell you what he did for Buffalo Bill and myself, now a year and a half ago, Mrs. Granger," said the captain.

But Louise seemed not to hear him, for from her lips broke the words as though she was thinking aloud.

"Too late, alas, too late!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

A MEMORY OF WEST POINT.

If Captain Armes noticed the low uttered words of Louise Granger, he did not appear to do so, but went on to say:

"It was when I was in the Southwest, down in Tennessee, and we were operating in the vicinity of Seldon's old home, yes, and I believe where your husband had also lived."

"I had been detached for service with Buffalo Bill's bordermen, who were famous scouts, and by a strange coincidence, Cecil Seldon was captain of Mounted Minute Men, also an organization of scouts in the Southern Army."

"One day a party of his men, and mine met, and in a valley, or rather a canyon."

"We were mounted, my horse was shot, I was wounded, and went down, and I gave up all for lost when Buffalo Bill dashed up to my rescue."

"Brave man!" said Louise, who was listening attentively.

"But his horse was killed and fell upon him, and the Rebels would have killed us had not Seldon ordered them not to fire, and demanded the surrender of Buffalo Bill, who at once did so."

And so the captain went on to tell the whole story as the reader knows it, and afterward followed the tale of Cecil Seldon's capture and sentence to death as a Rebel spy.

But not once did he say that it was Godfrey Granger who had recognized his old friend and been willing to sacrifice him, and that he, Granger, had been saved by Seldon under like circumstances.

The story was told in favor of Cecil Seldon, but Captain Armes did not once state that Godfrey Granger was the man thus saved.

And so he ran on until darkness fell upon the waters, and he said:

"I fear I have tired you, and kept you out too late, Mrs. Granger."

Louise started, for she was recalled to herself, for she would have listened as long as he talked of Cecil Seldon.

So she sent the boat shoreward, and soon after they joined the others in the parlor.

"She has heard that Seldon lives, for her face shows the anguish in her heart," muttered Ethel Enders, as Louise entered the parlors, while Captain Armes remarked to himself:

"Yes, she loves him yet, and now I know that Godfrey Granger let her marry him knowing that Cecil Seldon was not dead."

"If Seldon lives through this war there will be a reckoning yet between him and Granger, or I don't know the man, for that was a fraud against him, and upon that beautiful woman."

"Miss Enders said that she was sure that Mrs. Granger had been inveigled into a marriage with Granger, and believing Seldon dead, had been led to consent to the wishes of her father, and it is so, for oh! what bitter agony was hers when I told her the news, that Seldon still lives."

"It was better for her to learn it as she did, than hear it under other circumstances, that might betray to others that she still loved Seldon."

"She does not believe her husband guilty of deceiving her, and I would never deceive her; but I would not stand in Godfrey Granger's sinful shoes for the rank of a major-general, and a fortune thrown in."

Never before had Louise sung more beautifully than she did that night, or seemed gayer.

Her face was flushed, her laugh ringing, and she looked brilliantly lovely as she entertained her guests.

At last Eugene Enders said:

"By the way, Mrs. Granger, apropos to your and Ethel's flirtations at West Point, with the cadets, let me read you a scrap of poetry I cut from a paper a few days ago."

"May I?"

Permission was readily granted, and one of Eugene Enders's accomplishments was to read well, and taking from his pocket the poem, he read as follows:

"'Twas Commencement Eve, and the ball-room belle
In her dazzling beauty was mine that night,
And the music drearily rose and fell,
And the waltzers whirled in a blaze of light.

I can see them now in the moonbeams' glance,
Across the street on a billowy floor,
That rises and falls with the merry dance,
To a music that floats in my heart once more.

A long half-hour, in twilight leaves
Of the shrubbery—she with coquettish face,
And dainty arms in their flowing sleeves—
A dream of satins, and love and lace.

Yes, in that dream of Commencement Eve,
I remember I awkwardly buttoned a glove,
On the dainty arm in its flowing sleeve,
With a broken sentence of hope and love.

But the diamonds that flashed in her wavy hair,
And the beauty that shone in her lovely face,
Are all I recall as I struggled there,
A poor house-fly in a web of lace.

Yet a laughing, coquettish face I see,
As the moonlight falls on the pavement gray:
I can hear her laugh in the melody
Of the waltz's music across the way.

And I kept the glove so dainty and small,
That I stole, as she sipped her lemonade,
Till I packed it away, I think, with all
Those traps I lost in our Northern raid.

But I never can list to that waltz divine,
With its golden measure of joy and pain,
But it brings, like the flavor of rare old wine,
To my heart the warmth of the past again.

A short flirtation, that's all, you know,
Some faded flowers, a silken tress,
The letters I burned up long ago,
When I heard from her last in the Wilderness.

I suppose could she see that I'm married and old,
She would soften the scorn that was changed to hate,

When I chose the bars of the gray and gold,
And followed the South to share its fate—

But here's to the lads of the Northern blue,
And here's to the boys of the Southern gray,
And I would that my Northern Star but knew,
How the Southern Cross is borne to-day."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A CROSS TO BEAR.

EUGENE ENDERS ceased reading, and for a moment there was a silence upon all.

Each one had enjoyed the reading, and the memory of both Ethel and Louise could not but be carried vividly back to the time when they were the belles at West Point.

Each had her memories, more or less joyous and bitter, and Captain Armes could not but cast his eyes upon Louise to note the effect.

She saw the look, and interpreted correctly, for she said calmly:

"Those are sweet verses, Mr. Enders, and appear to have been written by one who knew what a West Point flirtation is.

"Where did you get them, did you say?"

"From a paper, which said the original was found in an officer's traps, taken from his dead horse."

"I have a scrap-book which I prize, and I would like a copy of the poem, if you will give it me," continued Louise in the same quiet way.

"You may have this copy, Mrs. Granger, for I do not care for it."

She took the slip of paper, thanked him, and, as it was growing late, the party retired for the night.

No, not Louise Granger, for after dismissing her nurse, she took her little baby in her arms, and gazing upon its sweet face as it slumbered, innocent of her sufferings, she said:

"You, my little one, are all I have to love now, for I never loved Godfrey Granger, and I dare not let my heart go forth as in the past to Cecil Seldon.

"And he still lives, and I am the one that has broken my pledge, for it was *until death do us part*."

"Yes, he lives, and I believe is bound by no tie to another, while I, oh, Heaven! have mercy upon me! I am another's wife, and my whole heart and soul goes out to Cecil, my lost love.

"Does he know, I wonder, that I am married?"

"Does he know, I wonder, that I still love him?"

"And does he still love me?"

"Yes, I feel it, I know it, for I have been the false one, I have broken the pledge, not Cecil, nor death, but poor me.

"And oh! how cruel is my punishment, and how bitter it will be through life, for now my baby girl is all I have to love."

The hours crept on apace, and the innocent little child slept sweetly on while the poor mother lived over her past and suffered.

Not until the gray of dawn stole into the windows, did she rise and lay the child in her little bed in the adjoining room where the nurse slept.

Then she walked to the window and looked out upon the river.

"Better by far had he let me sink beneath the waters of yonder river, than save me to live a life of bitterness and of anguish.

"Can it be that Godfrey Granger knew that Cecil Seldon was alive?"

"No, no, I will not wrong him by the thought.

"And oh! how this poem of West Point, which I still have clasped in my hand, brings up memories of the dances there I had with him.

"But this will not do, for I must seek rest, must have some sleep, for am I not Mrs. Godfrey Granger, and what have I to do with Cecil Seldon, a Rebel colonel?"

"Nothing, for he is nothing to me now, though I do believe that he still wears my miniature, yes, I feel that he has not cast it aside, though I, the woman, broke my pledge and became the wife of another."

She threw herself upon her bed, and by an exertion was almost instantly lost in slumber.

There her maid found her when three hours later she came to call her to dress for breakfast.

Captain Armes saw at a glance that Louise Granger had passed a night of cruel suffering, and Ethel Enders saw it too, though their fair hostess was as cheery and pleasant as on the day before.

That day after lunch the party started back for Villa Enders, Captain Armes having promised General Layton to make a visit of several days at Solace Hall before returning to the city.

Just a week after he came, and he could not but see by the haggard face of Louise Granger that she had been a great sufferer, and yet there was that in her look which convinced him that she would keep her secret hidden from all eyes, and be strong.

"That fellow Granger is a brute, to wreck the life of that beautiful woman to gain his own selfish ends, and he will yet feel the enormity of his crime against her, and against Cecil Seldon I verily believe and most sincerely hope!" muttered Captain Armes, when after a pleasant visit of several days at Solace Hall he bade farewell to the general and Louise, for he was not one to remain away from the front when able for duty in the field, and he had decided to return at once to his command.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A PRISONER.

A FIERCE battle had raged along the line all day, and Colonel Cecil Seldon had rallied about him a few men to repulse a splendid charge of the boys in blue.

They came on grandly, undaunted by shot, shell and musketry, and only halted when their decimated ranks were met by the force under Colonel Seldon, and beaten back, they doggedly

retired from the field, leaving their dead and wounded strewn the ground over which they had charged.

Among those who had fallen prisoners into the hands of the Confederates was a gallant major who had, flag in hand, led the charge as a last blow for the day of battle.

Color-bearer after color-bearer had fallen striving to carry the Stars and Stripes over the works, and the line had wavered when the flag went down for the fifth time.

Then there rode forward a horseman who swooped from his saddle like a Texan cowboy, seized the flag and rallying the line brought them on once more.

Under the shock of a countercharge, the tired boys in blue were forced back, and the daring horseman who held the colors went down with his slain horse.

He was upon his feet in an instant and his sword crossed that of Colonel Seldon, who cried:

"Surrender, sir!"

"Do not throw your life away, for see, your men are forced to retreat."

"Cecil Seldon, it is no dishonor to surrender to such a man as you," cried the Union officer.

"Ha! George Armes, old friend, give me your hand!"

And such was the meeting of these two men, the one wearing the blue, the other the gray, for their hands met in the warm grasp of friendship, foes though they were.

The colors were furled, the Confederate colonel called to his prisoner to follow, and the two walked back from the field.

As they passed into the Confederate lines there was a cheer, but Cecil Seldon quickly stepped up to his general and said:

"General, may I present to you an old friend of mine, Major George Armes, the officer who won our admiration by his gallant charge just now, and for whose safe keeping I would like to make myself responsible."

"I am glad to meet you, Major Armes; and to congratulate you upon your splendid charge, which, permit me to say, but for Colonel Seldon's meeting it as he did, I fear would have broken our line.

"Of course, Colonel Seldon, you have won the right to do with Major Armes as you please," said the general, courteously.

Back to the rear, still carrying his flag and accompanied by his prisoner, went Colonel Seldon to his own quarters, a tent apart from the others, and where his negro servant was preparing supper, for darkness had fallen upon the scene and only the occasional shot of a sharpshooter upon either side broke the stillness.

"Well, Armes, old comrade, you are welcome at my army home, and such poor hospitality as I can extend you are more than welcome to.

"The fortune of war went against you to-day, but I shall make it my duty to see if an immediate exchange cannot be made, as we lost to your men a gallant officer of your rank."

"Just like your old self, Seldon, true as steel to a friend, even though, to me a paradox, that friend is a foe.

"Well, I am glad to see you once more, and I congratulate you upon having risen so rapidly in rank as to wear a colonel's stars while yet you are so young, and which you have justly won, for I have heard of your gallantry again and again."

"And I have of yours, Major Armes, for you, too, are to be congratulated.

"But, do you know, I have not met any others that I knew in the by-gone."

"Some have won distinction, Seldon, others are maimed for life and retired, still more have fallen and yet this cruel war goes on."

"Yes, and I would that it would end, for cruel indeed it is to be facing brothers as it were in combat to the death.

"But tell me, what of that splendid fellow who was with you when last we met, who came so bravely to your rescue?"

"Buffalo Bill?"

"Yes, the scout and Indian-fighter who was my hero when I was a cadet, for his has been a remarkable life, young as he is."

"Yes, he is a true plainsman, and his whole life has been a thrilling romance.

"He went West soon after our adventure together, and is chief of scouts out at a frontier fort now, and winning new laurels."

"I am glad to hear of him again; but there is one other I would like to ask you of?"

"And who is that, Seldon?"

"My old boyhood and cadet chum, Godfrey Granger?"

The face of Major Armes darkened at the question, and as the negro announced supper just then he said:

"I'll tell you about him to-night, Cecil, and there is a great deal to tell."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE TWO OFFICERS.

THERE was very little that was tempting in a Confederate soldier's supper, and Major Armes had a good opportunity of seeing the difference between the rations of the Blue and the Gray.

He however was hungry, a chronic condition with a good soldier, and the bacon and hard-tack, with a tin-cup of coffee to wash it down was not to be refused, and so he ate heartily.

Still there was the regret in his heart that he would have to give his friend pain, for his having asked about Godfrey Granger showed that he knew nothing of his late movements.

The supper being ended there were a number of officers called at Cecil Seldon's quarters to congratulate him upon his bold act of the afternoon, while others came from a curiosity to see the Union officer whom he had taken prisoner.

At last the two friends were left alone, and the servant of Seldon having spread a blanket bed for the prisoner, had gone to his humble bed by the fire leaving the two so strangely met to talk over old times at their leisure.

"You have seen Granger lately, have you not?" asked Cecil Seldon, when their pipes were lighted and they had begun to talk of mutual friends in either army.

"Well, no, Seldon, I have not seen him since your close call from hanging as a spy."

"Ah, yes, I remember how close a call it was."

"Let me tell you that it was not so close as you thought, for, though I had been wounded and was unable to do anything for you, I had a good ally in Buffalo Bill, and we made up our minds that you should not hang."

"Ah! you did?"

"Oh yes, and so I sent for Granger, yet I could not get him to do anything at all."

"Armes?"

"Yes."

"Do you know that I believe that Granger wanted to get rid of me?"

"I am pretty sure that he did."

"I may wrong him, but I do not believe that I do, after all that happened."

"You do not I am certain, for he refused to act for me, and so Buffalo Bill and myself decided to save you.

"We put our heads together, and Buffalo Bill made a couple of false beards, got two officers' uniforms ready, and he was to go and capture the sentinel, gag and bind him, and then giving you an officer's dress, lead you out of the lines."

"The splendid fellow!"

"But we decided it would be best to see the general first, and so he went and had a talk with him."

"Indeed?"

"He told him of your service to us, how you had saved Major Layton and his daughter, and then how you had helped me and refused to take him prisoner."

"He told the general that?"

"Everything, for he made known to him how you had pretended you did not recognize Granger, when he was a spy in your lines, thus saving him from death and setting him free."

"How was this known, Major Armes?"

"Well, Granger told me, and I made it known to Buffalo Bill, telling him to let the general understand the situation, for I was determined you should not suffer."

"What did your general say?"

"I'll tell you what he did," and Major Armes went on to tell how the major had been sent for, and all that had followed, the affair resulting in his going to the army in Virginia.

Colonel Cecil Seldon listened most attentively to all, and then said:

"Well, George, I have to thank you and Buffalo Bill most warmly for all you did for me, and I almost wish that I had remained and been released."

"But not knowing what you and Buffalo Bill were doing for me, I could not but help myself, and I did so."

"But it pains me indeed to feel that Godfrey Granger did not do all he could to help me."

"Well, he was a man without any desire to help any one unless there was a great deal to gain by it for himself, and his selfish ends were to let you be put out of the way."

"Ah! do you believe this too, George?"

"I not only believe it, but know it, and remember Cecil, I am speaking of a brother officer in my own service and you are at liberty to quote me as your authority."

"Let me hear all that you have to tell, George," and the face of Cecil Seldon grew stern and there was a strange look in his eyes, a look that one who had wronged him would not wish to meet.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE COLONEL'S THREAT.

"THE general, after hearing Buffalo Bill's pleading for you, pardoned the fact that you had entered our lines as a spy, and said that you should be treated as a prisoner of war," continued Major Armes.

"That was generous in him indeed, and I appreciate it; but not knowing of his good intentions, I had a chance to escape, and did so."

"Through the desertion of the sentinel placed to guard you?"

Cecil Seldon made no response to this, but answered:

"On my way out of the lines I met Buffalo Bill, though he did not recognize me, of course."

"Oh, yes, he knew you afterward, when he found you were gone, for he said that you hesitated when he met you, and his suspicious aroused, he saw you pass the first sentinel, and then came to see me."

"But let me speak now of Godfrey Granger, who holds the rank of colonel in our army, and was upon the staff of General Layton."

"I heard that General Layton had lost an arm."

"Was it so?"

"Yes, and he was retired from the army, and is now living at Solace Hall, a pretty home upon the Hudson River left his daughter by an old maid aunt."

"I was there only a couple of months ago."

"Indeed!" and Cecil Seldon became most deeply interested.

"Yes, I was wounded in the arm, and while on leave went home with Eugene Enders, whom you remember."

"Oh, yes, and his beautiful sister, Miss Ethel, I remember most pleasantly; but I feared Enders was going at too fast a pace."

"He was, for he has run through with half of the fortune left him, and spends half his time with his sister only to recuperate from his orgies and save money; but I like him, and so visited at Villa Enders, and was most royally treated."

"It was while there that we drove down to Solace Hall to spend a couple of days."

"And you saw Miss Layton?" asked the Confederate colonel in a low tone.

"The lady is not Miss Layton now, you know, Cecil."

"Not Miss Layton now?" and the words fell slowly and with intense feeling from the lips of the Confederate officer, whose face Major Armes saw turn deadly pale.

"Did you not know it, Cecil?" asked Major Armes, though he knew now that Cecil Seldon had not heard of the marriage of Louise.

"Not know that Louise Layton was married?"

"No, I did not know it, and I do not believe that she is, for she was pledged to become my wife, George Armes."

"My poor friend, let me tell you that it was believed that you were dead, for the papers so reported it, and—"

"Yes, I remember, I remember, for I was so reported, but then why was it that she did not know that the report was false?"

"She did not know that the report was not true, as she was led to believe that you were dead."

"Led to believe so, and by whom?"

"By the man whose interest lay in causing her to believe that you were dead."

"And that man is—"

"Her husband."

"And her husband is—"

"The man who sent her word that you were dead, who sought a position upon her father's staff, who led her to believe that he was your best friend—Godfrey Granger."

As though a viper had struck at him with deadly fangs, Cecil Seldon sprang to his feet, his face aflame with fury, while he cried:

"Godfrey Granger then is the man who has done me this wrong?"

"Yes, Seldon, he led both General Layton and his daughter to believe you were dead, and, after she had mourned you for half a year, urged by her father, she consented to marry Godfrey Granger, though I feel sure that she told him the love of her life had been given all to you."

"They were married, and it was only when I was there at Solace Hall, that she learned that you still lived."

"Oh, my dear friend Armes, is there no mistake?"

"Did she really wed that man?"

"There is no mistake, Cecil, for she married him, and I it was told her that you lived, and I wished to find out, without compromising him in her sight, if he had believed you to be dead when he asked her to become his wife."

"You found out that he knew I was alive?"

"Yes, for it was after you had saved his life, after the general forced him to resign from his staff, and he knew the wrong he was doing against her and you."

To and fro paced Colonel Seldon for a minute before he replied, and then he stopped in front of the Union officer and said:

"I am no man to make threats, George, but I will swear to you now that one of these days I will bring Godfrey Granger to answer for his cruel act against Louise Layton, and then he will find me as merciless as he has proven himself to be toward her, and toward me."

"Remember my words, Major Armes."

CHAPTER XL.

UNDER FLAG OF TRUCE.

MAJOR ARMES knew that Cecil Seldon was not a man to make an idle threat, and he said:

"Yes, I felt that some day Godfrey Granger would be brought to book for his cowardly act."

"He will be."

"I told her that you were alive, Seldon, and I

did so for fear she would hear it under other circumstances, when it was best that she should not."

"Ever good and true, George."

"I felt that it was best that she should know it from me, for in speaking of you to Miss Enders and her brother I found that they believed you were dead, and I was certain then that Mrs. Granger did."

"Mrs. Granger?"

"An accursed name to my ears," hissed Cecil Seldon.

"How deeply she suffered I saw, and she had my deepest sympathy; but she was brave, and bore up nobly in her outward manner, though her heart was well-nigh broken, I could see, and she seemed afterward to live for her child alone."

"Her child?"

"Yes, her little daughter, Louise, the very image of her beautiful mother, and who is her only comfort now."

"I did not let her know, or suspect even, that her husband had deceived her, for I felt that would be known some day, and she should not have a deeper affliction to bear than the one she had in knowing that you were alive."

"Yes, our compact was until death parted us."

"And she believed that it had."

"Well, my good friend, I thank you for all your goodness, to her and to me, and I do not condemn her, oh, no, for I feel that she was honest in her belief that I was dead, that outside pressure led her to become his wife."

"But let us not talk longer upon the subject; let us retire, for I must think just how I can get you back to your army in the morning, and yet not prove a traitor to my own."

"These are the best accommodations that I can give you, but then you are a soldier, and can appreciate the situation as it is."

"Good-night," and Cecil Seldon offered his hand to his friend and prisoner, and the Union officer was soon sleeping serenely, while the Confederate paced to and fro like a sentinel on his beat for hour after hour.

Several times when Major Armes awoke he saw the colonel still walking up and down before his tent, but he knew well that he was not keeping watch over him, but instead that the iron of grief had entered deep into his soul, and that his heart was too full of sorrow for his eyes to close in sleep.

The next morning when Major Armes awoke he found the negro servant of Colonel Seldon with breakfast ready, but his master was away, gone to headquarters he said.

The major had just finished making his toilet at the brook near by when Cecil Seldon rode up, and said:

"Good-morning major. I am back in time for breakfast I see."

His voice was cheery, but his face showed how he had suffered.

Dismounting the two had breakfast together when the Confederate officer said:

"Now I have good news for you, George, for the general has consented to allow me to raise a flag of truce and offer to exchange you for Major Polk, captured by your men yesterday morning."

"You are indeed most kind, Cecil, and I appreciate it, as also the fact that the general allows it, but you were the one who got the permission."

"He was very ready to grant it, for the fact is Major Polk is one of his most trusted officers and there are certain things which he alone knows about, and all important to the general, so you see it is a natural concession."

"Now I will go out under flag of truce and make the proposition to your side."

Ten minutes after a bugler rode toward the Federal lines blowing a parley, while a soldier followed bearing a white flag.

Behind them came Colonel Seldon with a courier.

The bugler's parley was answered from the Federal lines, then a flag of truce was seen and an officer and a courier rode toward the Confederates.

When the two officers met they saluted politely and at once Colonel Seldon made known the cause of the flag of truce.

"I will report at once to the general, sir, and if satisfactory will meet you here within an hour accompanied by Major Polk, and I suppose you will be here with Major Armes, though this exchange is something out of the ordinary way of doing."

"Very true, sir, but I have explained to you that Major Armes is my friend and comrade of the past, that he rendered me certain service when I was a prisoner, and his gallant charge of yesterday won the admiration of all Confederates who saw it."

"Under such circumstances I asked his immediate exchange, and my chief has been kind enough to grant it."

"Pray so state matters to your chief, and within the hour I will be here either for your refusal, or to carry out the exchange of the two officers," and saluting Colonel Seldon rode back to his own lines.

One hour after he rode upon the field once

more with Major Armes, the exchange having been granted, and the two friends parted to again face each other as foes.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE SOLDIER OF FORTUNE.

A SPLENDID charge of Confederate cavalry, a scene of carnage, the leader, wounded and going down in a heap with his fallen horse, with night closing quickly in upon the scene was the result of one of the fierce battles of the war.

Over the field, strewn with the dead and wounded soldiers, a party of men were picking their way, flashing a dark lantern into the faces of the dead and the dying.

At last they came upon the head of the column, where the brave men had been mowed down like grass under the strokes of the scythe, and there lay a horse and rider, the latter pinned down under the weight of the animal.

But the rider was not dead, though wounded several times.

Fortunately the wounds were not fatal, though he had lost strength from the stream of blood flowing steadily and sapping life nearly away.

"Here is the colonel now," cried one of the searchers.

"Yes, and thank God he is alive!" another said.

Tender hands raised him from the ground, placed him upon the litter and he was borne slowly from the field and was soon in the hands of skillful surgeons.

"His wounds are serious, but not fatal, though it will be long before he can again take the field," was the surgeon's report, and the wounded officer was sent to safe and pleasant quarters far in the rear of the struggling army in the field.

Two months after there dropped in upon the wounded colonel a brother officer.

"Well, Seldon, I am glad to see you about again, and bring you a balm of Gilead for your wounds," said the visitor.

"Thank you, General Ross, but what is the good news?" answered Colonel Seldon.

"Well, it is just this:

"The President, upon the recommendation of the general commanding, has been pleased to appoint you a brigadier-general in the Confederate Army, and at the same time order you to proceed to Europe upon a special mission for the Confederacy, and will give you a year abroad."

"I am more than thankful, general, but I prefer to remain in the field."

"Nonsense, for the surgeon's report that where you can readily do the duty devolving upon you in this mission, it will be months before you are able to take the field again, for remember, you have been five times wounded during the war."

"Then too this is a military mission, and you can serve your country far better in undertaking it, as, if you return to the field, at the rate you have been trying to kill yourself, you will not be very long in accomplishing that end."

"No, you are to take a blockade-runner at Mobile and thus make your way abroad, and you are at liberty to depart the very moment you feel able to do so."

"I will leave for Mobile to-night," was the determined response of Cecil Seldon, and just one week after he took passage upon the blockade-runner *Greyhound*, and ran the gantlet of the Federal fleets to Nassau, from whence he sailed for Liverpool.

The voyage benefited him greatly, and before he had been three months abroad he felt that he was his old self again.

Starting upon his return he sailed for Vera Cruz, Mexico, after six months passed in Europe, determined to make his way into Texas and thus rejoin the Southern Army, after he had reported to the authorities in Richmond the successful accomplishment of his mission.

But when he arrived in Vera Cruz it was but to find that the cause was lost, the armies of the South were laying down their arms, the banner of the South was furled and the end had come.

What to do he did not know, and while considering he learned that some of his old men had come into Mexico to join Juarez, or to seek a haven of refuge in the land of the Montezumas.

At once his decision was taken, and he offered his sword to Juarez in the fight against Maximilian.

At last the Emperor Maximilian was captured and shot, and with the coming of peace there came a longing in the breast of Cecil Seldon to once more return to the United States.

His kindred were dead, his old home in Tennessee was but a wreck, the slaves were freed, yet it was his, and thither he would go.

Broken in fortune, he had but a few hundred dollars to call his own, but this small sum would be a foundation stone upon which to build for the future.

And so the Soldier of Fortune, Cecil Seldon, still a young man in years, but a veteran, and old in experience, mounted his horse and turned his head toward his native land, to once more revisit the scenes of his boyhood.

CHAPTER XLII.

IN BORDERLAND.

WHEN the South furled its conquered banner, and the Bonnie Blue Flag of the boys in gray had its tattered folds draped in black, the victorious armies of the North began to disband, the professional soldiers alone clinging to duty, while the volunteers, amateurs who had become veterans from their fights on many fields, returned to their homes and their kindred.

There was work yet for the boys in blue of the regular army to do, for the borderland was most unsettled and the Indians from Canada to Mexico were up in arms against the rush of settlers for the Wild West.

To posts in the far West officers of distinction had been ordered, and among the commandants of forts in borderland were Colonel Godfrey Granger and Colonel George A. Armes, both of whom had won most honorable mention for their daring services.

Among those, too, whose name was becoming more and more famous, was William F. Cody, Buffalo Bill, who had been made chief of scouts at Fort Rest, which was under the command of Colonel Godfrey Granger, while sixty miles distant an advanced post, known as Fort Famine, was commanded by Colonel George A. Armes.

Though comrades in arms, and brother officers, there was no love lost between Colonel Granger and Colonel Armes, for the latter was not one to disguise his feelings toward a man he had learned to despise, and nothing more than official courtesy ever passed between them.

Whatever the motive for Buffalo Bill's dislike for this commander, it was certain that it existed, though the scout was too good a soldier to make any show of it, or to exhibit a lack of discipline, while Colonel Granger certainly did find many occasions for venting a petty spite upon the chief of scouts, and, ranking Colonel Armes, he allowed no chance to escape of making that gallant officer feel that he was in command of that part of the frontier, at least.

If Louise Granger had discovered that her husband had deceived her, that he had known Cecil Seldon's reported death was untrue, she made no assertion to that effect, but when Colonel Granger returned to his home, just after a visit there of Major Armes, a few weeks after his exchange by the Confederate colonel, he was told by his beautiful wife that their paths through life must be divided.

"I make no charges against you, Colonel Granger, I leave all to your own conscience to account for what I say and do; but henceforth I wish only to live for my child, while you go your way undisturbed by me to carry out your bent in your own way.

"You are a soldier, so will remain in the service, and I will retire to your old home in Tennessee, with my father, Aunt Mabel, and my child, for as you inherited it, and put it up for sale at auction, I concluded to purchase it, and did so, and now it is my property."

"You bought my old home?" asked the colonel in amazement.

"Yes."

"Why?"

"And why not?"

"I wanted a secluded spot in which to spend my days, and Solace Hall is no longer so on account of the new settlement near us.

"My father and Aunt Mabel love the mountains, and my riches are enough to make us most comfortable in the old home, while father, who made the purchase for me, says it's a grand one, and the workmen are already there putting it in condition."

"You astound me, Louise."

"We will not discuss the matter, Colonel Granger, and I need offer no explanation of my movements to a man whose life has been false to friend and foe alike, to women as well as men.

"I need only say that as Solace Hall has quintupled in value, I can afford to be generous in the allowance I shall place to your credit at my banker's, and riches are what you have sought.

"Your pay will be sufficient for ordinary expenses, and the sale of your old home, I believe, paid your debts with a little over; but I have ordered the sum of one thousand dollars per month to be paid to you, so that as the husband of a rich wife you need not plead poverty and descend to the shabby genteel."

"Hold! do not insult me, Louise, for I am not one to brook insult even from a woman."

"I shall not insult you, but I have just this to say, that, for the sake of our child, I do not wish to seek a legal separation, yet should you again darken the door where I live, that moment shall your income from me cease.

"I wish to hear from you, yes, now and then, and have you write to little Louise, but there it must end, if you value money, and I have every reason to believe that you do.

"Get ordered out on the frontier, so the world need not know that we are parted, and simply go your way as I will go mine."

And so it was that Colonel Godfrey Granger, with the pay of his rank, and twelve thousand a year besides, took his wife's advice and sought service on the far frontier, while, by a strange coincidence, Major Armes was assigned to duty under his command.

CHAPTER XLIII.

ON BUFFALO BILL'S TRAIL.

"WHAT, Jack, are you going to leave us?"

The speaker was a Texan, and he had halted upon the prairie, with a score of other Rangers, as they met there a horseman riding slowly along northward, and with a led horse carrying all his earthly possessions.

The captain of the Rangers was a man known as Buckskin Sam* and he was a small, slender man, with an eagle eye and face devoid of fear.

As Captain of the Texas Rangers of the Rio Grande, he had won an enviable name, and it was with sincere regret that he was called upon to bid farewell to one who had been his right-hand man, Texas Jack.

The latter, since the reader met him as one of Cecil Seldon's scouts in the Tennessee mountains, when he had captured Buffalo Bill, had changed but little, being the same cheery-faced, fearless fellow as before, ready for anything that came his way, be it a fight, or sport.

He was now equipped for a long journey, and in answer to Buckskin Sam's question, answered:

"Yes, major, I have decided to go."

"Well, I didn't wish to believe you when you told me so; but the boys said you had decided and I knew what that meant, and we rode by your ranch to say good-by, and finding you had come by this trail, headed you off."

"Yes, I went down by the lower camps to say good-by, for I expected to find you there."

"But why do you go, Texas Jack?"

"The truth is, Sam, luck is against me here in Texas."

"Take a fresh deal and try again."

"No, I have played my best cards here."

"When I came out of the Confederate Army I started in to ranching, and the Mexicans crossed over the Rio, burned my cabin and run off my cattle.

"Then I joined the Rangers, and got another start, and then down upon me came the Comanches and wiped out my ranch again, not leaving me a hoof.

"So, I concluded, as good pay was offered for scouts up in the Northwest, I would go up there and offer."

"But will they take a Confederate in the Northern Army?"

"Bah! There is no Northern Army now, Sam, but the United States Army, and I reckon they won't ask my pedigree if they want a trailer, Indian-fighter and scout."

"Not if ever they see you on the trail and in a fight once they won't, Jack; but you've got a long way to travel and I hate to see you go alone."

"I have played a lone hand nearly all my life, Buckskin Sam, and I believe I can go through all right, for I have got a good outfit in traps and a young arsenal in the way of weapons, while my horses are that good that I can run from what I cannot whip."

"But where will you strike for, Jack?"

"One of the frontier posts, of course, for do you know I am going on a trail?"

"What trail?"

"You have heard of Buffalo Bill?"

"What man has not?"

"Well, I kinder like that specimen of a man and I am going to look him up, for I met him during the war."

"He was in the Union Army though."

"That does not matter, where a man is a true soldier, and he is all of that.

"I met him once and introduced myself to him with a lariat, and for the time we were acquainted we got to be real good friends, so I intend to look him up and see if he has forgotten Texas Jack the Rebel Scout, and my money says ten to one he has not."

"So I'll bet, from all I have heard of him, for they do say he is square from spur to scalplock."

"He is, and he is just the man whose trail I am on, or will be when I get up in his hunting-grounds."

"Well, Texas Jack, I hate to see you go, but I know you are bent upon it so I will not urge you to stay.

* Major Samuel S. Hall, a Texan Ranger, Indian-fighter and scout, who a few years ago gave up the revolver for the pen and became an author of considerable reputation. Buckskin Sam died in Wilmington, Delaware, several years since.—THE AUTHOR.

"When you get to the end of your trail drop me a line so we can know how you are, and tell us about your meeting with Buffalo Bill.

"If they don't treat you right up there, come back to Texas and you can be a Ranger again and that isn't so bad after all."

"I should say not, Sam; but I wish to kinder spread myself, you know, and so I take the Northward trail; but if luck goes against me there I'll come back to Texas if I have to turn cowboy and punch cows for thirty dollars a month and grub when you can get it.

"Good-by, Pard of the Saddle, and remember Texas Jack is still one of you in spirit and always will be."

A grasp of the hand all round, a cheer from the Rangers and Texas Jack had started upon his trail to find Buffalo Bill.

CHAPTER XLIV.

TEXAS JACK IN AMBUSH.

OUT of the State of Texas, up through the wild land of New Mexico, went Texas Jack, day after day, week after week.

He was in no hurry, for life was before him, and he had put the past, with its memories, behind him.

He rode slowly, sparing his horses all he could, walking over rough trails, and climbing and descending mountains on foot.

He camped only where he could get the best of grazing for his horses, and starting early, with the break of dawn, he camped from ten o'clock until four in the hot hours of the day, thus sparing his horses.

Once there was a hold-up by two Mexican outlaws, but it resulted in Texas Jack adding to his arsenal, and increasing his horses by two, while two graves by the wayside showed that the road-agents had made a mistake in attacking the wrong man.

Again it was a chase by red-skins, a stand off for a few hours and an escape by night, for Texas Jack knew the "tricks of the trade" where Indians were concerned, and gave them the slip.

After being weeks on the trail Texas Jack felt that he was drawing toward the end of his journey, for he knew that there was a military outpost but an easy day's journey away.

He camped that night upon the summit of a high ridge, and when the morning dawned he was startled by the sight that met his vision.

Far below, in a beautiful little valley, was encamped a band of red-skin horsemen.

The Texan had his field-glass with him, and quickly seeking shelter, he turned it upon the Indians, who were some two miles distant from him.

"Sioux, and on the war-path."

"They came into the valley last night, and are waiting for their scouts to come in and tell them when and where to strike.

"Of course the military outpost is their destination.

"Well, they have not seen me, and so I'll get out as quickly and safe as I can.

"Then it is a ride for the fort to give the alarm, for there are all of a thousand braves in that red-skin army, and that means enough to give trouble, especially if it is a surprise."

So saying Texas Jack took a more careful observation of the encamped red-skins, counting them as well as he could, and then he got his horses together and retreated down the mountain the way he had come, to go up the valley, and, by a flank movement, reach the outside well in advance of the red-skins.

He rode rapidly now, mounted upon one horse and leading the other three, for the animals captured from the two outlaws were fine ones.

He pressed on for several hours, then coming to a canyon penetrating the ridge, turned into it, and several miles further came out upon the plains, which were heavily timbered.

He had just encamped at noon, when, ascending a rise, he started as he saw a party of men coming toward him.

His glass showed that they were red-skins and nine in number, while they were on foot.

"The Sioux scouts, returning to make their report to their chief, and their being on foot proves that the scouts of the post are good ones, as they dared not ride and leave a trail.

"They are coming this way, and I hope will pass me without discovering my camp; but I'll prepare for a fight at least, as retreat I will not, and to leave here would at once betray me."

"I'll take yonder pile of rock for my fort," and the Texan at once led his horses to the shelter of a group of bowlders piled up on a hill-top, and amid which the grass grew plentifully around a small spring.

"I could not have asked a better place to stand them off from, but I hope they'll go around the base of the hill and not notice my trail."

So saying he stationed his horses around the rocks, all ready saddled to move at a moment's notice, and then took up his position where he could command the approach from every direction.

The Indians soon after came into view and were following an old trail around the base of the rise.

There were nine of them and they moved along in an Indian trot, scarcely turning a glance to either side.

But as they came opposite to the pile of rocks the leader halted, pointed up in that direction, and they at once started up the rise.

"Yes, they are coming."

"That fellow is thirsty, and knows there is a spring here; but I'll quench his thirst forever," and, as Texas Jack uttered the words he brought his rifle to a level, ran his eye quickly along the sights and then, as the leader of the Indian scouts came within sixty yards of the rocks, he pulled trigger.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE TEXAN AT BAY.

THE shot of the Texan went true to its target, which was the head of the Sioux brave, and he went down upon his face without knowing what killed him.

Texas Jack had waited for the Indians to get as near as he dared allow them to come, before he fired, for he wished to get a chance to throw in a few other shots before they should get out of range.

He had his own two rifles and the guns of the two outlaws, and these, excepting the one in use, he stood close at hand.

Then his revolvers lay upon the rocks within reach of his grasp, and he felt no doubt as to his ability to stand off the red-skins, or even to make a splendid showing if they ran in upon him.

The moment the brave dropped the others sprung quickly for shelter, but one was tumbled over before he got out of harm's way and a third got a wound in the shoulder.

It was when they were in shelter that the Indians first turned to see who their foes were, for they supposed there were more than one.

There was the group of rocks, with the tiny rivulet flowing down the side of the hill and coming from the spring, but not a soul was visible.

There lay two of their comrades, to show that their foe had aimed to kill, and the third was smarting with the pain of his wound.

They took in the situation, and then there were certain orders given among themselves.

A moment after, from either side, warriors were seen to leave their shelter and dart along to form a circle around the position of the scout.

They were determined there should be no escape for him, and they meant to go about his capture and death in a business-like way.

They soon had the place surrounded, and Texas Jack muttered:

"This looks like a siege, and yet I must get on to inform those at the fort that there is a raid coming down upon them, for that band of Sioux in the mountains mean to go there, I am sure."

"Well, I shall wait until dark, and then I can mount and dart out suddenly, for I will have but the gantlet of two of them to run, and I reckon I can get through."

"Anyhow I can but try, and with four horses they will think I am more than one man to fight."

"At any rate there are but seven of those fellows now where there were nine, and maybe I'll get a chance to pick off another one or two before dark."

So Texas Jack got his dinner ready and

ate it, while still keeping an eye upon the positions of the red-skins, for they still kept out of sight.

He had no dread of their making a dash upon him, as he knew that they had seen the trail of four horses, and therefore thought they had as many men to fight.

No, they would try strategy, he was well aware, and he would try the same.

But suddenly his face clouded, for coming from another direction he beheld another party of scouts, also on foot.

There were seven in this party, and Texas Jack felt assured that they, too, had been scouting toward the military post and were returning to meet the main force and report what they had discovered.

Their comrades in hiding saw them, too, and signaled to them.

The result of the signaling was that the party divided and each sought the position of their comrades who were already in hiding.

"This begins to look dubious," muttered the Texan, and he looked about to discover any advantage that might, or might not be in his favor.

Suddenly an Indian showed himself, in mere bravado, and to see if their foe among the rocks was on the watch.

He made the discovery to his sorrow, for his arm dropped to his side, the bone being shattered by Texas Jack's bullet.

There was a howl of pain, echoed by yells of rage, and Texas Jack laughed.

Then he placed his hat upon a stick and pushed it with his elbow up to the top of the rock, as though some one was peering over, while he held his rifle ready to let a bullet fly at the brave that showed himself in his anxiety to get a shot at the head he believed to be under that sombrero.

A shot quickly came from a distant rock, and it cut the hat, but just as quick was the touch of Texas Jack upon the trigger of his rifle, and another yell told that the red-skin who had nibbled at the white man's bait had cause to regret it.

"This is getting real interesting, I declare," muttered Texas Jack, as he walked across to the other side of the rock pile to play the same game upon those who had not seen the success of the hat scheme upon their comrades.

CHAPTER XLVI.

A DOUBLE GAME TO PLAY.

THE sombrero scheme upon the other side again worked well, for though Texas Jack got another bullet-hole in his hat, he managed to be revenged upon the one who fired the shot.

The bullet he sent so quickly at the spot from whence came the Indian's shot, struck the rocks and filled the warrior's face full of little pieces of shattered lead.

But the other red-skins were too close on the watch for Texas Jack to dare risk it again, for before, he had fired from several feet distant from where his hat was visible and thus had escaped being seen.

"I see no chance for me except to make a dash to-night, and I believe I'll get through all right," said Texas Jack, to himself.

But as he spoke, far across the plain he saw another party of braves coming.

These too were also on foot, and were five in number.

"That settles it, for if all my shots have counted they fill the gap and I've still got a score of them to fight," he muttered in a disconsolate tone.

"Yes, I see how it is, the three bands went out as scouts to reconnoiter, and are returning to the main force, which has evidently just come down from their village."

One force went to the north, the other to south of the post, and the third kept a position between the other two, and this enabled them to cover the entire ground on this side.

"Well, they do not intend that I shall escape, but, as soon as darkness falls I will make a rush with my four horses, and if I have to break away and leave the others and my traps I'll do it, for the post must know of its danger."

The third party of Indian scouts were met, as they drew nearer, by one of the force besieging Texas Jack, and they came to a sudden halt.

After some talk with the warrior they

broke up and took up positions as evidently directed to do.

They had hardly gotten into position when suddenly a score of rifles rattled forth and as many bullets pattered among the rocks.

"By Jove, but I am in luck not to have been hit that time."

"After that hint I'll lay low," muttered the Texan, and he sat down where he would be protected by the rocks.

Thus a couple of hours passed and Texas Jack ventured another look.

"Ah! another band eh?"

"No, there is but one man, and yes, he is a pale-face."

"He is on the trail of the first party of scouts and coming on in this direction."

"That means that he will ride right into an ambush."

"Yes, he halts where the trail of the second party joins the first."

"Now he comes on again."

"I'll take a look at him through my glass."

The glass was gotten and turned upon the horseman.

"Splendidly mounted, and—by Heaven! that man is Buffalo Bill or his double!" cried Texas Jack excitedly.

He looked now more earnestly at the horseman, and saw him halt where the trail of the third party of Indians joined the other two.

He dismounted and carefully examined the trails, then turned his glass upon the country ahead.

But all looked quiet, no sign of a moving being was in view.

"Yes, it is Buffalo Bill, and he is coming right on here."

"The trail leads by yonder group of rocks, half hidden by those scrub trees, and right there I know are three red-skins in ambush."

"Yes, and among those other rocks to the left a hundred yards are two more braves, so they have yonder rider right where they want him, or will have unless I chip in this little game, and I've got a stack of chips I'm willing to play," and he patted his revolvers affectionately.

The coming horseman was still half a mile away, and the trail he was on would lead him right into an ambush at the bottom of the rise.

That the Indians had discovered him Texas Jack knew, and he felt that they hoped he had not discovered them.

He at once made up his mind as to his course.

He would warn the horseman by a shot, then dash out and ride forward with all speed to join him.

But, as he made up his mind to do this he saw several other warriors slip toward the place of ambush.

He knew that the horseman could not see them, and while he was still surrounded he dared not run the gantlet of seven or eight Indians, for he would surely be brought down.

So he changed his plan for another.

"They are afoot, he is on horseback, so he is safe if he keeps out of range."

"I will warn him by a shot and then call to him that there is a large force in the mountains, ready to raid the fort, and he can ride for aid, while I'll have to stand the siege until help comes."

"If they crowd me too close, why I must break out with one horse, that is all."

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE WARNING.

TEXAS JACK awaited until he felt that it would not be safe to allow the horseman to come any nearer the ambushed Indians, and yet he desired him to get as near as possible, for he wished him to hear all that he had to say.

He had to take chances, he knew, but the game was worth the risk.

The nearer the horseman came the more Texas Jack was convinced that it was Buffalo Bill.

Twice before he had seen him, once when he was rescued from just such a scrape, about the time the war broke out, and the second time when he and his fellow scouts had captured Buffalo Bill in Tennessee.

Yes, there was the same splendid form and handsome face, with the darkly bronzed

complexion, mustache and imperial, the long brown hair and picturesque garb.

There was no mistaking the man; it was Buffalo Bill who was riding directly into the ambush, which Texas Jack, from his retreat among the pile of rocks, knew was prepared for him.

Another minute and the risk would be too great, so Texas Jack acted.

This he did by emptying his repeating rifle into the place of ambush where the Indians were grouped, with the hope of doing some deadly work, or harm.

As the bullets pattered among the rocks and scrub trees, he sprang up and waving his sombrero, gave the horseman a quick glance of his position.

The horseman had halted quickly at the rattle of the rifle, then half turned, as though to fly, but the next instant stood at bay.

The red-skins had been surprised at Texas Jack's act, but they had done just what he felt they would—open fire upon him.

This fire, from all around his position, revealed their hiding-places to the horseman.

It all had taken but a few seconds of time, and then, loud, clear as a trumpet came the words:

"Pard, are you Buffalo Bill?"

"Ay, ay! I am! Who are you?"

"Your old Rebel pard, Texas Jack, and I am corraled here.

"There are a score of dismounted scouts, who are returning to the mountains where, at the base of yonder peak, twenty miles away, there are a thousand mounted Sioux in hiding. Ride to the fort and give the warning!"

"Bravo, Texas Jack; but you are in danger?"

"Oh, no; I'm all right; so you gallop to the fort to give the warning."

"How many are with you?"

"My four horses—look out!"

As Texas Jack spoke he saw the Indians dash from cover upon Buffalo Bill, whom they wished to drive out of range of hearing.

Buffalo Bill wheeled his horse and rode some distance off, but was too far to throw his voice back in reply to Texas Jack.

The Indians had fired upon him, but their bullets had fallen short.

When he halted the scout took a note-book and pencil from his pocket, and hastily scribbled a few lines upon a page.

This he tore out, and with hair taken from the mane of his horse he tied it to his saddlehorn.

Then he arranged the reins, and riding back toward the Indians, dismounted.

Texas Jack was, meanwhile, from a crevice in the rocks, anxiously watching him.

"Why does he not go on to the fort with the warning?" he muttered.

As he drew nearer the Indians, Buffalo Bill stepped a few paces from his horse.

The faithful animal stood as still as a statue, until suddenly the scout started toward him.

Neither the Indians nor Texas Jack heard what Buffalo Bill said to his horse, but they saw the animal dash away, leaving the scout dismounted.

Both Texas Jack and the red-skins believed that Buffalo Bill's horse had run away from him, and the scout carried out this idea by chasing the animal some little distance.

But, instead, the scout had said:

"Now, Dragoon, go, and lose no time. Off to the fort, sir!"

So away the obedient animal had dashed, while the Indians yelled with delight, and a party moved off to advance upon the dismounted man.

"That is too bad," muttered Texas Jack, and he made up his mind that when dark came he would make a dash, and Buffalo Bill, as he was firmly convinced the horseman was, would have a mount upon one of his horses.

Retreating to a rise a mile away, where he could be sheltered by rocks, Buffalo Bill took up position to stand the red-skins off, while Texas Jack mused:

"Well, he don't run for it, if he is afoot, and that makes it easier for me, as the Indians will divide their forces to corral him, too.

"Ah! that shot told, and at very long

range! The imps will now understand that he does not intend to be crowded."

The Indians had scattered to cover as one of their number who had been following Buffalo Bill had been knocked over at long range, as a hint to keep at a respectful distance.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE RUSH FOR LIFE.

THAT the Indians had an elephant upon their hands, was evident by their actions.

They could manage their first game, they thought, though they were more and more convinced that there were four men among the rocks.

There appeared another who had not ridden into their ambush, but instead, though dismounted, had found a retreat, which he had shown that he could fight from with great danger to his foes.

Of course this second man meant a division of their forces, for it would never do to let him get to the fort and give the alarm.

What they had discovered in their scouting toward the fort, they must also make known, for a quick dash by night and an attack at daylight, which would be a surprise, would surely win them the victory, and that meant hundreds of scalps, captives and plunder for them.

The red-skins therefore determined upon a council of war; and half a dozen of them met, held a conference of a few minutes, and the result was that one of their number went off at a trot toward the distant mountains.

"He has gone to bring up the large force, and that means that they will sweep over me, Buffalo Bill next, and then on to the fort.

"But I'll spoil that game by getting out of here as soon as darkness comes on," mused Texas Jack.

Then he saw that the Indians were signaling to each other, and the result of this was that the force about his retreat was divided and he counted three warriors march off in the direction in which Buffalo Bill was corraled.

"That means six for Buffalo Bill, counting those in position there, one off to give warning to those in the mountains, and about ten or twelve for me, as far as I can make it out, for several certainly have turned up their toes, if not more.

"Now let me see how I'll fix it.

"I'll get the horses ready, and dash out the moment it is dark, taking the side where I believe they have the fewest braves to break through.

"Then, if I don't go under, I'll push hard for Buffalo Bill's position, and he'll know I am coming by the shots.

"He'll keep those fellows busy to watch him, and if I can gain his position then we two won't mind being corraled, if we don't get wounded, but that chance we must take."

So Texas Jack having decided upon his course at once began to prepare for it, as within another hour it would be dark.

Not an Indian was in sight about Texas Jack's position, but far off he could see, with his glass, that they had Buffalo Bill surrounded, several of the half-dozen red-skins that were there being visible to the Texan.

Texas Jack felt that his safety lay in the belief that there were four white men there, and this would help him when he dashed out, as the red-skins would be afraid to rush upon a body of men too hastily.

He got his horses together, tying one on each side of the animal he rode, and leading the fourth, the pack-animal.

He tied them lightly too, so if one was shot and went down in the rush, the rein would break and the other animals would not be dragged down with him.

As darkness came on he mounted, and having selected the position where he would dash through, he drew a revolver in each hand and then rode slowly out from among the rocks.

He got further than he expected without discovery, and fearful of a trap he gave a yell and drove the spurs into the flanks of his horse.

Away went the four animals at a bound, rushing along down the rise at a breakneck pace, while scattering shots were turned up

on them from the various positions of the Indians.

Had the Texan known just where the line was thinnest he could not have chosen a better place to break through, for there were but a couple of Indians in his immediate front.

The others, however, seeing their game escaping them, made a rush to aid their companions, and their rifles rattled viciously.

One of the outlaws' horses was hit hard and went down, but the rein broke and on dashed the Texan.

Another of the horses, the one on the other side was struck, yet not seriously wounded, and a bullet cut through the Texan's flesh on his right shoulder, inflicting however but a slight wound.

His revolvers, however, never ceased to rattle viciously, and with the wild Rebel yell, he knew so well how to utter, he broke through the red-skin line and reached the plain beyond.

As he did so he saw the flashes of the rifles far away, where the other scout was corraled, and he knew that Buffalo Bill had opened fire to make those about him show their position to him as he came on.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE DOUBLE RESCUE.

ON sped Texas Jack, rapidly dropping the red-skins behind him, for he kept his horses up to their full speed, while they were on foot, though in full chase.

What would he do, they wondered?

Ride on to the fort to give the alarm, or attempt to rescue his comrade?

They were not long in doubt, for the Texan rode straight toward the spot where Buffalo Bill was corraled.

It was not as strong a position by any means as the one held by the Texan, and there was no spring of water there.

Then the rocks were a group of small ones, upon the apex of a hill, but not large enough to afford shelter for a horse.

The Texan realized this, and his plan was to dash up, firing as he came, have Buffalo Bill stand ready to mount quickly as he went over the hill-top and the two then dash on to safety, which, with the Indians on foot, they could readily do.

But the Indians surrounding Buffalo Bill appeared to realize just what the game was that the Texan intended to play.

The hill was a rough one, and only here and there could a horse go up it, and, as Texas Jack came up in a certain line they rallied at that point to check him, knowing that their comrades would soon be up behind him and in an open fight on the plains they would be victors, from sheer strength of numbers.

One brave had fallen, and the flash of the Texan's revolver showed to the red-skins that there was but one rider, and that gave them hope, which they vented in wild yells of triumph.

Instead of five pale-faces they would have but two to deal with, and they apart.

On flew Texas Jack straight for the hill, where Buffalo Bill's rifle was seen flashing steadily.

The Texan felt that the Indians had massed to meet him, to head him off, but he rode on, determined to break through the line.

Mounted as he was he could have flanked them and gotten safely away, but he was not the man to leave Buffalo Bill there to fight the whole force for his life.

So he headed straight for the hill, and as he drew near he opened ahead with his repeating rifle at random, at the same time uttering his wild Rebel yell.

He saw that Buffalo Bill was coming down the hill also, for the flashes of his rifle showed this, as he had divined what the Texan meant to do.

And answering the yell of the Texan came the wild war-cry of Buffalo Bill, while the whoops of the red-skins chimed in with an appalling chorus.

The base of the hill was nearly reached and Texas Jack settled himself for the last charge.

Behind him came the echoing cries of those red-skins in chase of him, to cheer their comrades in his front, and who were nerved to desperation for fear of his escape.

Opening upon them from the hilltop was Buffalo Bill, firing at random of course in the darkness, yet striving to make them reveal their position by an answering shot or two back at him.

But this the cunning Indians would not do, as they knew but too well the deadly foe that they had corraled, and that his aim was sure.

No, they would not fire until their coming prey was almost upon them and then a volley should tumble him from his saddle, and when their comrades came up they would rush upon Pa-c-has-ka* and have his scalp also to triumph over.

But Texas Jack had learned to ride among the Comanches, and he suspected that he would have to face a volley, so, as he drew near the base of the rise, where the Indians were grouped among the rocks there, he suddenly threw himself on the side of his horse, and over his head swept the hail of bullets.

But one of his horses got a death wound and fell, and, as he dashed through the Indians another went down, and then the animal he was riding.

All the while, however, he had kept up a rapid fire with his revolvers and not an aimless one either, for one red-skin had fallen dead and another wounded.

Then there was heard the wild war-cry of Buffalo Bill, and he dashed upon the scene.

There was a rattle of revolvers, wild war-cries, a short struggle, and the remaining red-skins ran for cover, while Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack, hastily cutting the pack-saddle and riding-saddles from the horses, ran back to the top of the hill to stand at bay and fight off the whole force which must soon be upon them.

CHAPTER I.

THE TWO SCOUTS.

"A VERY close call, pard, but here we are," cried Buffalo Bill, as with the saddles they ran up to their position, the same where Buffalo Bill had been.

With their united strength they moved several rocks into a position to form a barrier, the saddles were placed on top, the blankets also, and then they sat down with their weapons ready to meet the red-skins' attack.

In bringing the things from the fallen horses Texas Jack had not forgotten the rifles and revolvers of the two outlaws he had slain, and so they were well supplied with weapons.

"We are but two, yet let them come on," said Buffalo Bill, as the yells of the red-skins told that they had reached the spot where their comrades had fallen.

"Let us give them a few shots, firing at the crowd," said Texas Jack, and the repeating rifles flashed out several shots each.

The yells that followed told that the Indians were at least surprised, if not hurt, and they hastened to cover with wonderful alacrity.

"We are lucky not to have been hurt, pard," said Buffalo Bill, as they sat in position, each one watching that they were not surprised by a rush of the red-skins.

"I got nipped in my shoulder, but it does not amount to much, and I'm in luck it is no worse; but I'm awful glad to see you once more, Pard Buffalo Bill."

"As I am to meet you again, Texas Jack, and especially when there is no longer a war ravaging our land, and we can be openly friends."

"Here's my hand upon it that we will be friends, pard."

"And mine; but what are you doing away up here, and alone?"

"I was looking for your trail."

"My trail?"

"Yes."

"How so?"

"Well, I got wiped out twice ranching in Texas since the war, once by Mexicans and then by Indians, and so I concluded to hunt the forts and see if I could get in as a scout for I knew that you would give me a lift."

"I will indeed; but have you come alone from Texas?"

"I have played a lone hand right through, pard."

*The Indian name for Buffalo Bill and which means Long Hair in the Sioux tongue.

THE AUTHOR.

"I started with a first-class outfit, upon a good pack-horse, and I increased the lay-out by two horses, some weapons and some odds and ends I got from two outlaws who had held me up."

"You were in luck."

"They were not quick enough, and trusted too much in Texas human nature, so I played my trumps and won."

"I got up on yonder ridge last night and camped, and at daylight I saw in the valley a thousand Sioux braves, and their ponies, and I knew they were waiting for something to turn up."

"So I backed out and was riding for the post to give warning, when I got corraled by pine red-skin scouts afoot."

"Two other parties dropped in on me, and then I knew that they had been scouting around the fort, and were going to lead those mounted red-skins down upon you."

"Then I saw you coming, so gave you a warning, and you know the rest."

"You have rendered such good service, Texas Jack, that you will at once be welcomed as a scout, and I will be most happy to have you with me."

"How'll the boys in blue stand a Rebel in the service?"

"You will be most welcome, I assure you."

"I am glad to hear that; but what service is it that I have rendered, Buffalo Bill?"

"You warned me off, told me what was up, and there will be troops here before dawn."

"How did they know about the Indians?"

"I sent word to Colonel Godfrey Granger about the massing of the red-skins in the mountains, and while the cavalry from Fort Famine will ride rapidly around to the head of the valley, the troopers from Fort Rest will strike them here, or rather up at the ridge."

"The very idea, to catch them between two fires; but what force can you send from the forts?"

"Three troops from Fort Rest, and as many more from Fort Famine, in all about four hundred men."

"That will fix them; but may I ask you how you sent word, for I saw no one with you?"

"I sent word by my horse, for he carried a note to Colonel Granger, and we may expect the party from Fort Rest very soon, while Colonel Armes will himself lead the men from Fort Famine, and that means they will be on time to head off the red-skins, for he is a hard rider, and a fierce fighter as well."

CHAPTER II.

THE DUMB MESSENGER.

FORT REST was the headquarters post, with Fort Famine sixty miles to the southward and Fort Protection fifty miles to the northward.

The latter was a small post, guarding a settlement, and with a garrison of but two companies of infantry, a troop of cavalry and two guns.

Fort Rest being the headquarters for the three garrisons, was under command of Colonel Granger. It was the largest and strongest garrison, having five companies of infantry, three troops of cavalry, and a six gun battery of light artillery, besides a number of scouts, cowboys, and hangers-on, while many of the officers had their families with them at the fort.

Fort Famine, to the southward, was next in force and strength to Fort Rest, and was commanded by Colonel Armes, and here, too, officers had their families stationed with them.

A weekly stage of the Overland ran from Fort Famine via Fort Rest, to Trail End City, a settlement from which diverged several coach trails.

With the forts and Trail End City a triangle was formed, Forts Famine and Protection being the two outer corners, Fort Rest being between them, and the stage-station the inner point.

The Overland stage-trail going from Trail End City to Fort Famine, and especially between the two forts, was known as the most dangerous one to drive on the frontier, for many an unfortunate driver had lost his life

there, and travelers had been murdered and robbed in a most mysterious manner.

So frequent had the murders been committed, that the drive had been known as The Fatal Trail, and as all the crimes had been committed in nearly the same spot, the scene of the tragedies was called the Death's Canyon.

Fort Rest was a most desirable frontier post, as far as its strength of position and comfort was concerned, and its commander, Colonel Godfrey Granger, was a favorite with the garrison generally.

A splendid-looking man, a skilled soldier, the hero of many battle-fields, an old veteran, though young in years, and reputed to be very rich, he was a man to be admired, and he was.

Young girls, and designing mothers regretted that he was a married man, and many wondered why his beautiful wife did not join him upon the frontier, for his quarters were of the most luxurious kind for an army fort far from civilization.

It was late on the afternoon of the day when the two scouts were corraled, that the sentinel on the watch-tower at Fort Rest, descried a horse coming over the plains at full speed. It was soon announced that he had no rider, but was saddled and bridled, and a short while after an officer cried:

"It is Buffalo Bill's horse, Black Dragon."

All was at once excitement now at the fort, for the question arose as to what had happened to the famous chief of scouts.

As the horse came along like the wind, his flanks were seen to be white with foam and he was dripping wet.

He neighed wildly as he ran, and as he dashed into the stockade gate he was caught by a soldier and brought to a standstill.

His hide was dripping, his nostrils extended, and he panted like a hound after a long run.

The rein was around the saddle horn, his stirrups lashed together with the stake-rope, and tied to the pommel was seen to be a piece of paper.

This was quickly taken off and it was found to be a leaf from a note-book and it was addressed to

"COLONEL GODFREY GRANGER,

"COMMANDANT

"Fort Rest."

At once the officer of the day hastened to headquarters with the paper, and handed it to Colonel Granger.

A very young man still, particularly so for one of his rank, Colonel Godfrey Granger had greatly changed since nearly seven years before when he had gone into the war fresh from the West Point Military Academy.

There were the traces of a hard and dissipated life imprinted upon his handsome face, and his manner was stern, cynical and severe, for he was a stickler for the strictest discipline, and though courteous to his officers there was yet a coldness in his manner that forbade intimacy.

Taking the paper from the officer of the day he unfolded it and read as follows:

"COLONEL GRANGER,

"SIR:—I learn from a scout corraled on Rock Hill by a score of red-skins, that a thousand mounted Sioux are in hiding in the valley at the base of Round Top, evidently intending a raid upon the forts, when their scouts return."

"I have found trails of Indians on foot near the fort, and verging toward Round Top, and I send this by my horse, while I remain so as not to give the alarm."

"A courier sent to Fort Famine could order a force of cavalry to flank Round Top, thus cutting off the Indians, when you attack them with cavalry from Fort Rest."

"I will be on the trail to meet any force from Fort Rest."

With respect,

"BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER III.

ON THE MOVE.

COLONEL GRANGER knew Buffalo Bill too well to neglect a warning from him, and he was too good a soldier to delay in doing what was his duty.

So he at once sent for a courier, had a letter written to Colonel Armes stating the situation, and the man rode away at full speed with orders to change horses at the

two stage Relay Stations and make the ride in the very shortest possible time.

Then four troops of cavalry and two light guns were ordered to start at once, and so half an hour after the arrival of the scout's horse two hundred and fifty men were on the move, splendidly mounted and armed.

They went along at a brisk trot, and were well on their way by the time the sun went down.

But it was a ride of over twenty miles to the scene where the scouts were corraled and it was nearing midnight when the commanding officer saw flashes far ahead that told that they were nearing the spot where they could be of service.

A skillful frontiersman the commander of the force at once halted and sent a party of scouts ahead to flank to either side and discover just what number of red-skins were there, and he halted his troopers until he knew:

The scouts went cautiously forward on foot, deploying to the right and left, and soon came to the conclusion that Buffalo Bill, perhaps others, were corraled upon the hill-top, and were firing at the red-skins who had them hemmed in.

As the red-skins fired back again from time to time it revealed to the scouts that their force was a small one and so a man was dispatched back to the command for reinforcements so that they could be surrounded and thus caught in a trap.

To do this took half an hour, and suddenly the scouts advanced upon the hill and the Indians, completely surprised, were fairly caught, for whichever way they ran it was only to dash upon a pale-face who appeared to rise from the earth to confront them.

Of the party besieging the two scouts there was not one escaped, and the rescuers saw that the besieged had rendered a good account of themselves, for half a dozen red-skins lay dead about the hill.

"Captain Dean, you got here sooner than I thought you could, sir, and you helped us out of a tight place, for those reds were determined to get our hair.

"But this is my pard Texas Jack, sir, to whom we owe the warning of danger, and as game a man as it was ever my pleasure to meet, sir," and Buffalo Bill presented thus to Captain Dean his comrade the Texan.

Captain Dean gave Texas Jack a warm welcome and heard from him just what he had discovered and what had been done.

It was then decided to camp for a short rest and supper, and then push on to meet the band of redskins who must soon be along.

"If you will give us a mount, captain, Texas Jack and I will push on ahead at once and see if we cannot arrange a place of ambush for you, as I am sure those Indians do not expect to find a force here, and will push on to the fort, expecting only to meet their dismounted scouts at Rock Hill," said Buffalo Bill.

Two led horses were at once brought forward, and leaving his traps with the artillery, Texas Jack mounted and with Buffalo Bill rode to the front.

They reached Rock Hill, and it was decided that the artillery could be masked there and the cavalry held in position behind it, to charge at the proper time, and so Texas Jack remained there to halt Captain Dean as he came up, and Buffalo Bill rode on still further to reconnoiter.

Captain Dean was not long in coming up, and he at once acted upon the suggestion of Buffalo Bill, so the two guns were placed upon the hill, just where Texas Jack had held the red-skins at bay, and the troopers were put in position where they could not be seen.

The Texan then rode on ahead after Buffalo Bill, and a little over a mile further on came up with him.

Buffalo Bill was standing in the trail by the side of his horse, and said quickly:

"Hark! do you not hear them?"

"Yes, they are coming."

"They are, indeed, so we will return to the command and report."

"Do you think the Fort Famine cavalry have had time to get into position yet, Buffalo Bill?"

"Yes, Captain Dean, for the courier must have reached the fort in four hours, and they

will have until dawn to get into the head of Round Top Valley, and it will be long after that before the red-skins retreat through there, sir."

"Well, I am ready to strike, and if the other force heads them off we will give them a severe blow.

"Attention, for I hear them coming now."

CHAPTER LIII.

A DEADLY BLOW.

THE heavy column of mounted warriors came along at a slow trot, all anticipating the blow they must strike upon the fort, which they were confident of surprising.

The Indian runner had reached the valley, where they were waiting, just after dark, and had told them how the three bands of scouts had found the fort wholly unsuspecting any attack from the Sioux, and upon the return they had come upon a couple of pale-face scouts, which they had surrounded, with no chance of escape.

It was about Rock Hill that the chief expected to come upon his dismounted scouts, but that he would find there foes he had not the shadow of a suspicion.

It was then a complete and appalling surprise to the red-skins when the head of their column, which was marching in close order, reached the hill to suddenly behold two red flashes like lightning and hear the terrific roar of two guns, the shrieking of the shells, and the bursting right in their midst.

Warriors and ponies went down beneath those terrible shells, and while the frightened men surged backward other shots came to demoralize them the more.

Then came the ringing command:

"Charge!"

There were the wild war-cries of the scouts, the piercing Rebel yell of Texas Jack, and the cheers of the boys in blue, and, like an avalanche the cavalry came around the base of the hill and were upon the Sioux warriors.

The shock was appalling, and red men and white men went down, ponies and horses were rolled in the dust and rapidly rattled the revolvers and rifles, while the clash of the sabers rung out loud and ominously.

Nothing could withstand that gallant charge, and though one fourth the force of their foes, the boys in blue hurled the red-skins back and a wild stampede followed, for the Sioux knew not how many they had to contend with.

Back toward the mountains they fled, and it became a running fight, the Sioux making a stand where they could do so for only a few minutes.

Dawn came and the Sioux saw that they were flying from one-fourth their number, and they were preparing to rally where their position gave them every advantage, when suddenly in their rear was heard a wild cheer and upon them dashed three troops of cavalry from Fort Famine led by the gallant commandant himself.

"I told you so, for I knew Colonel Armes would not allow his men to go into a fight that he did not lead them," cried Buffalo Bill to Texas Jack, as the two rode side by side after the Indians.

This attack upon their rear utterly demoralized the Indians, and they broke for the steep hillsides, where, unable to force their ponies up them, they sprung from their saddles and sought safety by climbing up the mountain steeps.

Carbines cracked and revolvers rattled as the Sioux fled in dismay, and the battle was won, while half a thousand ponies fell into the hands of the victors.

"A glorious victory, Buffalo Bill, and the credit belongs to you," cried Colonel Armes, as he rode back from the chase.

"No, colonel, to my pard here, Texas Jack, whose capture of me in Tennessee I told you about, sir, at the time, for he was a Rebel scout, but has now come to join the boys in blue."

"Good for you, Texas Jack, and I bid you welcome.

"Yes, I have heard of you, and as Buffalo Bill says, the credit of this surprise belongs to you; you will find every man in both forts your friend, and most willing to greet one who wore the gray," and Colonel Armes offered his hand to the Texan, who was delighted at his very cordial reception.

While a company of troopers, dismounted, pulled on after the red-skins, and the two guns tossed shells far up into the mountains, the rest of the command went into camp to get breakfast and gather up the dead and wounded.

The soldiers had by no means escaped easily, for a number had fallen, and a score or more were more or less wounded, while the red-skin dead lay scattered all along the trail of flight.

It was late in the afternoon before the pursuing troop returned, and as the red-skins were reported still in full flight, it was decided to camp where they were until the following morning, and then return to the fort.

Buffalo Bill had pointed out Texas Jack's Fort, as the hill was called, and told how he had given him the warning, so that the Texan scout found himself a hero among heroes, and he was greeted upon every side most cordially.

As he had lost his horses, Colonel Armes told him to pick out four of the best of the Indian ponies, and this he did, putting upon them his traps, which the artillerymen had safely kept for him.

The next morning the victorious soldiers started upon their return for their respective forts, while Colonel Armes said:

"See here, Texas Jack, I am going to take you with me, and, though Buffalo Bill will be your chief, you will be captain of the scouts at Fort West, for I need just such a man as Cody reports you to be."

And thus it was that Texas Jack became a scout upon the plains of the Wild West, and the life long friend of Buffalo Bill.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE TWO HOMES.

RIVERSIDE REST was the name of the plantation home of the Grangers, situated in East Tennessee, and upon the banks of the Little Tennessee River.

It was a large, rambling old brick mansion, two stories in height, and with rooms of spacious dimensions and a number of them.

There had the Grangers been born for three generations, and it was that home which Godfrey Granger had left as a boy to go to West Point and become a cadet.

There were a thousand acres surrounding Riverside Rest, and in the bygone all had been well cultivated, and realized for the master a handsome income.

With the death of Mr. Granger and his wife, their son, Godfrey, had become the heir, just after the close of the war.

He had regarded it as an inheritance of little worth, and, as he never intended returning to it, and was heavily in debt, he ordered it put up at auction.

The one who had purchased it for less than ten thousand dollars cash, was General Layton, acting for his daughter, who, in the event of her husband's death, would really claim the property as her own.

But Louise Granger wished the property as her own without taking the chances of Godfrey Granger's dying, and so she bought it with her own money, fitted it up in most luxurious style and then went there to live.

Riverside Rest was certainly a beautiful spot, with the velvety lawn, large park, the river flowing by, and the views of the mountains not very far distant, while the broad cultivated acres surrounded it upon every side.

Back in the edge of the forest were the quarters where those who had been slaves once dwelt, and in a quiet spot upon the river was a walled-in space where rested three generations of Grangers.

And this was the home to which Louise Granger had gone, taking her father, Aunt Mabel and the idol of the household, little Louise with her.

It was the very spot in which to dream away a life and be content, and there Louise Granger found a restful feeling come over her, almost amounting to happiness, while Aunt Mabel was content, the general delighted with their new home, and little Louise more than happy amid the flowers, the beauties of nature, the grand old mansion and with her ponies and dogs to play with and entertain her.

Down the river a couple of miles could be

seen another plantation home of the olden time, its white walls visible from the piazza of Riverside Rest.

This home was situated under the shelter of a mountain spur, and the park and grounds about it had been once grand and beautiful, for ruined walls of stone marked the flower and vegetable gardens, and the out-houses were crumbling to decay.

A fierce battle had been fought there during the late war, and the marks of shells and bullets were to be seen upon all sides.

The house had been built of stone, and stuccoed, while it had originally been of a delicate tint; but the fences and all were down, the grounds overgrown with bushes and weeds and there was a look of neglect and decay upon all.

The slaves having been freed had sought homes elsewhere, all save one family of negroes who clung to the plantation, tilling ground enough to give them a living and awaiting the heir's return.

The family who had dwelt there when the war broke out lay in the little burying-ground over on the river-bank, for the master, his wife and others that made up the household had passed away.

Such was the home of the wandering Soldier of Fortune, Cecil Seldon, two years after the war, and which was known as Shadyside Manor.

There were several thousand of acres surrounding the mansion, and in prosperous days the generous earth had yielded a very large income to the master.

Here had been reared Cecil Seldon, surrounded by refinement and luxury, until he went to enter the military service as a cadet at West point.

Two miles up the river was Riverside Rest, the home of the Grangers, and there had Godfrey Granger lived as a boy amid his kindred.

Other old houses were scattered here and there amid the valleys, yet none as grand as had been Riverside Rest and Shadyside Manor, and now all except the former had been ruined by the war.

Dwelling so near to each other it was not to be wondered at that Godfrey Granger and Cecil Seldon became the warmest of friends.

One day Godfrey would spend at Shadyside, the next it would be Cecil at Riverside Rest, and as a means of going to and fro it would be in a row-boat, by vehicle or on horseback.

They learned to become dashing riders together, to row a boat, to swim, to dance with the pretty girls, and to study at the little school all the neighboring children attended.

They hunted and fished together, and in fact were inseparable, and loved each other as brothers.

But alas! when a fair face came between them, it touched the weaker nature of Godfrey Granger, and his friendship for Cecil Seldon turned to hatred.

CHAPTER LV.

AT THE FERRY.

ALONG the highway winding among the mountains and valleys of East Tennessee, than which there is no more beautiful country the wide world over, a horseman was riding one balmy afternoon, some two years after the Civil War had ended.

He was well mounted, and both horse and rider had the appearance of having journeyed far, for they looked travel-stained and weary.

There was a blanket-roll behind the Mexican saddle, enveloped in an army rubber blanket, a lasso hanging from the horn, a repeating rifle strapped to the cantle, a stake-rope about the neck of the horse, and large saddle-pockets, well filled, giving the appearance of a traveler who was prepared to camp by the roadside for the night, if need be, for he also had a small fryingpan, tin cup and coffeepot.

His horse was a large, long-limbed animal, that seemed to care little for the load he carried, for his rider was tall and of sinewy form.

The face was one of strange perfection, the features being all shapely and strong in expression.

His hair was dark, and worn rather long, and his complexion was almost olive in hue,

apparently from exposure to the elements for a long time.

The rider was dressed in a suit of gray corduroy, and he wore a broad-brimmed sombrero and top-boots, with Mexican spurs.

He seemed to be studying closely every scene that met his vision as he moved along.

There was a stern expression about his mouth in strange contrast to a settled sadness that rested in his most expressive eyes, and he looked like one who had known the world well, its joys, its adversities and its sorrows.

The highway ran around the base of a mountain ridge, then through a valley, passed between two ranges and came to the banks of the Little Tennessee River, that wound its swift way along through the picturesque scenery upon every side.

As he came to the river-bank he halted, for there was a flat-boat ferry as a means of crossing, and the boat was upon the other shore.

Upon each bank was a small log cabin with clay chimney, where the negro ferryman made his home, according to which side of the river night caught him upon.

A stout cable ran across the river, tied to large trees upon either bank, and upon this were two iron rings, attached by ropes to each end of the ferry-boat, which could thus be drawn safely across.

A sign board was upon the bank and it read as follows:

"Railroad station 15 miles.
"A bloody battle fought here before the Revolutionary War, with Indians.
"A fierce fight fought here between Confederates and Federal's in the late Civil War.
"To call the ferryman blow the horn.
"The Rapids half a mile below, so do not go down the stream beyond this point.
"Shadyside Plantation next plantation above and Riverside Rest two miles beyond.
"To reach them take left hand road after crossing."

The rider read the information contained upon the signboard carefully over, and then took from its hook, where it was hanging, the boat-horn and placed it to his lips.

Loud, clear, ringing were the notes, which showed he was no novice with the horn and it sounded far and wide, penetrating the glens and valleys, and coming back in a thousand echoes from the mountain-side.

But no form came out of the little cabin upon the other shore, no one appeared to answer the call.

Again the bugle was placed to the horseman's lips, as he dismounted and bitted his horse, and once more the echoes went far and wide.

Still no boatman appeared.

"The boatman sleeps soundly indeed," he muttered, and in a clear, commanding voice he gave a loud halloo.

It too penetrated the woods and valleys, yet the result was the same, for it brought no answer.

"I may have to swim across and bring the boat back yet, for I do not wish to camp here to-night within sight of my old home," said the horseman, and once again he hailed.

Then he took the horn and sent the most ringing notes out over the waters.

"I will have to swim across, for I do not care to return home in the darkness, though perhaps it were better if I did do so, for then I would not see so soon the changes time has wrought.

"Yes, I'll swim across, and then gallop rapidly home to change my wet clothes for dry."

He had just cast off his hat, coat and boots, when there came to his ears in a childish voice:

"Uncle Toby! Uncle Toby! save me, please, or I will be drowned."

One glance out upon the waters, and sweeping around the bend came a pretty skiff, while in it was a golden-haired little girl of tender years.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE RESCUE.

JUST where the ferry was there was a bend in the river, and around this had come the prettily painted skiff with its single occupant, a little girl of six years of age perhaps.

Her golden hair hung in waving masses adown her back, her beautiful face was pale, and she knelt in the boat, her tiny hands

clasping the gunwale, while her eyes were bent upon the shore as she looked appealingly for Uncle Toby the ferryman.

As the horseman beheld the skiff, it swept under the ferry cable, and was inside the danger line.

"Uncle Toby is not here, my child; but I will save you," cried the horseman, and he ran along the river-bank for some distance until he got below the skiff, which was going faster and faster in the increasing speed of the waters as they neared the rapids.

Once the boat got into the whirling, seething current a few hundred yards below and it would be hurled along to its destruction upon the rocks that formed the rapids.

Plunging into the river, after another call to the child to keep up a stout heart, the man swam with bold strokes out to head off the boat.

He knew that he took his life in his hands, but he did not hesitate, and with powerful strokes soon reached the boat and grasped the gunwale.

"There are no oars in the boat, sir," said the child.

A groan almost broke from the lips of the man.

No oars.

Then how could he save the child?

He tried to head the boat ashore, swimming behind it, but the roar of the rapids came to his ears, the waters were already becoming white with foam and he knew that both would go to destruction if he hesitated longer.

His only chance was to have the child spring overboard and swim ashore with her.

But the chances to do this were lessening each moment.

"Come, my little one, spring into the water and I will save you."

She did not hesitate an instant, but obeyed, and clasping her hands upon his broad shoulders, he turned toward the nearest shore.

He realized fully the desperate struggle he had before him.

He knew that the chances against him were a thousand to one, but he nerved himself to the work.

He was already in the seething current, and he said:

"Hold hard, little one, or you will be torn from me."

"I will, sir; but if you can't save me, don't you die, too," was the low response, and he felt upon his wet cheek a kiss.

"I will save you, or die with you, child," he said, almost fiercely, and the words of the little one nerved him as never had he been nerved before.

He felt that he was a giant in strength and endurance, and he swam with strokes so powerful that he surged shoreward through the rushing caldron of waters.

"I will save her," he said through his shut teeth, seemingly forgetful of his own danger.

"Oh! see mamma!" cried the child as she looked shoreward.

"Yes, mamma, Uncle Toby and Clara."

"Don't be frightened, mamma!"

"This brave gentleman will save me," cried the child, and the bold swimmer heard the fervent prayer:

"God in Heaven grant it!"

His eyes were dimmed by water, his exertions were so great he could see nothing, and yet he knew that a mother was watching, was praying for him to save her child.

Those ashore could lend no aid, so must stand in silence, hoping and praying.

There was a carriage there with a coachman in livery, a lady standing upon the brink of the bank, a quadroon girl with staring eyes and an old negro, Uncle Toby, the ferryman.

There the three were, while the coachman was reining in his horses, frightened at the roar of the cataract.

Nearer and nearer came the powerful swimmer to the shore, and nearer and nearer to the rapids he swept, while those on the shore ran along to keep pace with him as he was swept down by the seething current.

All now felt that it was a struggle for life and a desperate one.

Could mortal endurance conquer against such odds?

Could the man reach the shore ere he was swept against the first rock of the rapids, now but a hundred yards away?

No word was uttered now, only all looked in silence, the silence of despair.

A few more vigorous strokes and he would triumph.

Had he the strength to make them?

Yes, for suddenly he bent every energy in a despairing effort, his foot touched bottom, he staggered up the bank and, as the mother clasped her darling to her arms the brave rescuer fell his length upon the sward at her feet.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE RETURN.

PANTING like a tired hound, his broad bosom rising and falling convulsively, his hands clinched yet, the veins upon his face and neck standing out like whip-cords, the bold rescuer lay upon the ground, wholly unable at first to move.

The mother had clasped her child to her breast, then the little one recalled her to the rescuer by saying:

"He saved me, mammal but is he dead?"

The mother sprung quickly to the side of the prostrate man, her hand rested upon his shoulder, and she started to speak, to give an order to Uncle Toby to raise him up, when suddenly, like a cry of a despairing soul, came the words:

"Cecil Seldon!"

The eyes opened quickly, a thrill ran through the strong form of the man, and, after a great effort, he staggered to his feet, while in a voice hoarse and quivering from exertion, he said:

"Yes, Mrs. Granger, I am Cecil Seldon."

"I owe to you, General Seldon, the life of my only child, the idol now of my life, and you have now all of a devoted mother's gratitude."

"But you are ill, you over-exerted yourself, so let me drive you to my home, where you—"

"No, no, I thank you, Mrs. Granger, for my horse is upon the other side of the river, and Toby will soon take me there, when I can ride to my home," he said quickly.

"But you must know, General Seldon, that the war has ruined your home, that there can be but a cold welcome for you there, while my father and my aunt will be most happy to welcome you at Riverside Rest."

"Pardon me if I still decline, Mrs. Granger, for I am anxious to return to my home, even though, as I felt assured it would be, in ruins."

"It will the better chime in with my own life."

He regretted the words the moment they were uttered, for he had not meant to be cruel, but they were said, and he saw the expression of deep sorrow and suffering that came upon the face of Louise Granger.

"Please, sir, won't you come home with me?" said little Louise, taking his hand.

As an atonement for his words to the mother, he said:

"No, little one, I must go to my own home."

"Good-by," and he raised her in his arms and kissed her.

Then with a bow to Louise Granger he turned away and said:

"Come, Uncle Toby, we will go up to the ferry."

"I was scolding you for being away, but had you not been, I would not have seen that little one's danger."

"Yas, massa, I went up to Riverside Plantation with a sick gemman as was going there, and I was hurryin' back, when I heerd ther horn, when missis overtook me in de car-ridge and tell me that Missy Louise hab got into de boat and it drift away wid her down de ribber."

"Den I jump up with Black Jack and we druv fast as we could and seen you when you put Missy Louise on your back and swim ashore."

"I didn't know who you was, sah, but I was sart'in you would never get ashore, sah."

"But now I knows yer, Massa Cecil, though I hain't seen yer fer nearly a dozen long years, and you has got to be a great man, a general, sah, for I has heerd o' yer, sah."

"Had I know'd it was you savin' Missy Louise I'd have told missis she need not pray so, for you'd do it, for, from a boy, sah, you

had a way of doing jist what you sot out ter do, sah, and de goo' Lor' bress you for it, sah."

"I is pleased ter see yer, sah, 'deed I is," and Uncle Toby wrung the hand of Cecil Seldon warmly.

"I am sorry, sir, I did wrong to get into the boat and give you so much trouble, but I went to sleep on the cushions, and when I woke up I was away down the river, and I called to Uncle Toby to save me, when I saw you," little Louise said, and going up to him she continued:

"We must go now, but you'll come and see us soon?"

"We will meet again, Louise, some time," was the low reply, and he imprinted another kiss upon the lips held up to him.

Then he started away when Louise Granger put out her hand and said:

"Let me repeat the invitation which Louise has given you, for you will come to Riverside, will you not?"

"No, Mrs. Granger, I cannot," and he followed on after Uncle Toby, while the mother went to her carriage with a great joy and sorrow commingling in her heart, joy that her idol had been saved, and sorrow that her life and Cecil Seldon's had been forced apart for all time by a cruel fate.

And so, while Cecil Seldon and Uncle Toby returned to the ferry, Louise Granger and her child drove rapidly homeward, the heart of the mother full to overflowing.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE WELCOME.

UNCLE TOBY went rapidly back across the river to bring over the horse and clothes of Cecil Seldon, while the latter paced up and down in his stocking feet, his clothing saturated, his face stern.

With watch and chain, with papers in his pocket, he had sprung into the river, thinking of nothing but saving the life of the little child.

At last Uncle Toby came across, and mounting his horse the returned soldier rode homeward at a gallop.

It had been a dozen years since he had followed the winding road, yet he knew it well.

It passed the gate turning into Riverside Rest, and the beauty of the house, in strange contrast to the others he had passed, mostly in ruins, he could not but notice.

He rode by slowly and when he had gotten on his own land he urged his horse once more into a gallop.

And yet, as he went by his quick eye had detected a form and face at an upper window.

He saw a field-glass raised to the eyes and he knew the gaze of Louise his lost love, was upon him.

He set his lips firmly, for, there came upon him with overwhelming power a flood of feelings which he dared not trust himself to give way to.

At last the walls of Shadyside Manor came in view, and he could not but note the change.

His lands were a wilderness, overrun with grass, weeds and bushes.

The massive gateway leading into the mansion grounds was half in ruins, and an old, deserted cannon lay near upon one side of the road.

Under a large tree he saw a group, of graves, and he knew that soldiers had been buried there, slain in the battle along the river-bank.

The sun was nearing the horizon of the blue range of mountains beyond the valley, and he would not linger long to look about him.

The grand drive was weed-grown, the ornamental trees broken down or bent and twisted, the vases were shattered, and neglect, desolation and ruin were stamped upon everything.

He saw no one and so rode around to the rear of the mansion, and beheld a man standing near a cabin a hundred yards away, while several young negroes were playing not far from him.

The old negro he spied was seated in an easy-chair, a relic of the mansion, and was smoking his pipe of corncob after his supper.

"Ho, Uncle Dallas, how are you, and have you no welcome for the wanderer?"

The old man was upon his feet in an instant, and with one glance he said, as he grasped the masters' hand, just as he dismounted:

"Yas, sah, I has a welcome for you, Marse Cecil, for I knows yer, I knows yer."

"The years has changed yer from boy ter man, yer even has a few white hairs in yer hair, young as yer is, and yer face is dark and stern, but I knows yer, I knows yer."

"Yer has been away a long time, and yer has won greatness in the army, yer has changed a heap in looks, and yer is a general, they tells me, but ther Lord knows that I knows yer, I knows yer, and yer is jist ther same ter me."

"Here, ole woman, come and see ther master, for praise de Lord, he am home ag'in."

The dark eyes of the sad-faced man grew dim at this welcome, and when old Aunt Patience came out and greeted him, he dared not trust himself to speak.

"We has yer room all ready, Marse Cecil, for we know'd yer come some day, and we is so glad ter see you."

"Here, yer lazy little niggers, jist stir yer stumps and git some wood ter cook supper for master, though yer doesn't know, though there comes somebody as does," and while the little negroes fled to the woodpile, Aunt Patience pointed to a young negro man coming from the barn-yard carrying a pail of milk, while a mulattress accompanied him.

"There comes Sophy, sir, and her husband Dan, who was your body-servant in the war, sah," and the two approached, to both spring forward at the call of the old woman that "Marse Cecil was home ag'in."

And such was the welcome home of Cecil Seldon by the faithful family of negroes who had remained true to him and the dear old home they loved so well.

CHAPTER LIX.

THE DEPARTURE.

THE little negroes soon had plenty of wood, and Aunt Patience set to work to cook supper for the master, while Dan built a fire in the dining-room and bedroom of the house to air it, and Sophy prepared the bed and table.

The two rooms were all that were furnished in the house, and these had an assortment of the furnishings of the other chambers, and contained all that had been saved of the negroes from the ravages of war.

The old family portraits had been saved by Uncle Dallas, and were hung in the dining-room, and with a lamp lighted and wood fires burning upon the spacious hearths, for the evenings were growing chilly with the approach of autumn, there was an air of cheerfulness that bespoke comfort.

That Cecil Seldon was deeply affected was certain, but he assumed an air of cheerfulness he did not, could not feel, and once he had changed his wet clothes for others he had in his saddle-pockets, he sat before the fire and talked with old Dallas.

Supper was soon ready, some bacon and eggs, hot biscuit, fresh butter, coffee and cream, and Cecil Seldon was forced to do justice to the meal, for there stood old Patience watching him as though his happiness depended upon what he ate.

It was late when they left him to retire, the good old couple having talked with him until midnight, and it was Aunt Patience who told him how Colonel Granger's home had been sold, his wife buying it, and that she had come there to make it her home, after having it fitted up grandly.

"And she comes over here, sah, sometimes on horseback, sometimes walking, and again in her rowboat, for she seems to love the old home."

"You just should see her row, Massa Cecil, for she is so beautiful, and she told me how you saved her pa and herself from drowning, and she asked me so many questions about you."

"And when was her husband, Colonel Granger, last here?"

"He has not been here, sah, and her maid told Sophy that he did not intend to come, sah."

And so old Patience ran on, telling the returned heir all the news, and to which he listened with deepest attention.

Early the next morning he was up, had

breakfast and went strolling over the plantation on foot.

General Layton, Aunt Mabel and Little Louise called, driving over in the carriage, but after waiting over an hour, as he could not be found, they departed, telling Dallas to say that they would come again the next day, to thank General Seldon for having saved the life of the "idol of Riverside Rest," as her grandfather called Louise.

It was late in the afternoon when the master returned, and then he heard of the visit of the party from Riverside Rest.

He made no comment, but said:

"Uncle Dallas, I wish to make you my legal representative here, so you and Aunt Patience will drive in your wagon with me early to-morrow morning, and I will have the papers made out.

"I will leave you some money, with which to hire labor, and get stock and seed, so you can clear the fields and plant them, laying aside to my credit what money you make, from the sale of the crops, over your expenses and own pay."

"But, Marse Cecil, hain't you going to stay here, sah?" anxiously asked the old man.

"No, I shall leave to-morrow."

"Whar you going, sah?"

"I really do not know yet; but I find I am not yet callous enough to come back to my old home, so I will go to wandering again until I feel that I can remain.

"I am glad to see that you have kept the burying-ground of my kindred free from weeds, Uncle Dallas, and you must not let the old home tumble quite down, for the crops will bring in a good income, I am sure, and there is no better planter and overseer than yourself, I well remember, for my father left much to your management."

"Lor', Marse Cecil, but I'se awful sorry you is gwine away ag'in."

"Well, I may return sooner than I expect, but now I could not remain here.

"I did not know that Riverside was occupied, or I should not have returned.

"I will write to you now and then, and you can address me through my lawyer, Langley Sperry, in Knoxville, should you have anything to communicate to me.

"Yas, sah, I will, or leastways Sophy and Dan will, for they both writes extra fine, havin' been to school since slavery days, sah."

The next morning bright and early Cecil Seldon arose, had breakfast, and mounting his horse rode away, followed by Uncle Dallas and Aunt Patience driving in an old army ambulance in which they made their weekly pilgrimages to the village for provisions, and to sell their market produce.

About an hour after their crossing the ferry, the Riverside carriage rolled again up to the door of the deserted mansion and Dan came out and announced that the master had departed.

CHAPTER LX.

BEYOND RECALL.

In the Riverside carriage, on its second going to Shadyside Plantation, there were General Layton, Aunt Mabel, Little Louise, and Mrs. Granger, for at the last moment she decided to go.

Driving up to the old house, they found a more cheerful look about it, for Uncle Dallas and Dan had been busy about the grounds, and Aunt Patience and Sophy had put the house in order.

They were therefore very much amazed then when Dan told them that the master was gone.

"Gone, and where?" asked the general, while Louise Granger's face turned white, as though she understood it all.

"I don't know, sir, but Massa Cecil told us all good-by, and said he was going away again, and he didn't know when he would return."

"This is remarkable indeed," the general said.

"Perhaps the home was too lonesome for him," suggested Aunt Mabel.

"What do you think of this, Louise?" asked General Layton of his daughter.

"I hardly know what to say, sir," was the answer, while Louise's eyes filled with tears, and she said:

"And he went away, grandpa, and didn't tell me good-by."

So back to Riverside they started, and then the general thought that they might still find Cecil Seldon at the village, as Dan had said he had gone by that way to sign some papers for Dallas and Patience, so he ordered Black Jack to drive there with all haste.

Uncle Toby's boat was upon the other side of the river, and so they lost half an hour before they could get across, and as they neared the village Black Jack said:

"There comes Uncle Dallas now, sir."

The old negro couple were halted, and General Layton asked quickly:

"Where is General Seldon, Uncle Dallas?"

"He's gone, sah."

"Is he not in the village yet?"

"No, sah, he left afore we did, and said he was going roamin' once more, and maybe he'd jine another army somewhar whar dere was fightin' going on, sah."

"I am sorry, Uncle Dallas, for we were anxious to see him and thank him for his noble conduct the other day.

"You can drive back home, Black Jack."

And back to Riverside Rest went the carriage, and upon arriving there Louise Granger went for a stroll alone along the river-bank.

She was sad of heart and wished to be alone to think.

"He has gone, and it was to shun me, for he did not know I was here.

"Will I ever see him again, I wonder?"

"What do I not owe to him, for he has saved me from death, my father and my child.

"He also saved my husband from perishing as a spy upon the gallows.

"And what in return has been his recompense?"

"Deceived by the one he deemed his dearest friend, my broken pledge to him, the cause he espoused lost, and he a wanderer and poor, for his home is a wreck, his ambition blasted, his hopes for the future unfulfilled and nothing of happiness in anticipation.

"Does he believe that I was willfully untrue to my pledge?"

"Can he believe that I loved Godfrey Granger or ever could do so?"

"Oh! if he but knew, if he but knew the sorrow in my heart, the bitterness, the anguish I suffer he would pity me."

She turned her steps homeward and near the mansion met her father.

The general wore a sad look upon his face, and his mood was a serious one.

"My child, I was coming to seek you," he said.

"I have finished my walk, father, but we will sit yonder in the river arbor if you wish."

He led her there, and as they sat down upon the rustic bench, their eyes falling upon the distant Manor of Shadyside Plantation, the general said:

"This is a very bad business, my child."

"You mean the going away of General Seldon, sir?"

"Yes."

"I am sorry, father."

"He would not have returned home had he known that I had purchased Riverside Rest, and we were dwelling here."

"So I believe, and I am deeply pained at the sorrow he must feel, and which I know that you suffer, brave woman that you are.

"It was my fault, I fear, yet I believed Cecil Seldon in his grave when I urged your marriage with Godfrey Granger.

"I looked upon him as partly our rescuer, as Seldon's best friend, and as a true, a noble man, and I was deceived, that is all, as you were, for, until you told me that Granger knew that his friend lived, that he knew that you were engaged, and owed it to him that he was saved from being hanged as a spy, I never suspected him to be the traitor to honor and friendship that he was."

"I well know that, father, and it was when I was convinced of his treachery that I told him that our paths must divide through life, and, as I paid him a liberal income he was willing to accede to my demand."

"It is a sad case, Louise, for that splendid fellow Seldon goes forth in the world again a wanderer, leading an aimless life.

"A born soldier, a man who rose to high rank, whose career was a most brilliant one in the South and in Mexico, whose diplo-

macy abroad won fame for him, now with a wrecked life because a supposed friend was treacherous to him and to you," and the general was deeply moved at the picture he had drawn, while Louise said softly:

"Well, father, he has his cross to bear, and I have mine, and I will not make others unhappy through my sorrows, for have I not you, and my little idol?" and she smiled through her tears.

CHAPTER LXI.

THE SECRET AGENT.

THE scene again shifts, and once more the reader goes with me to the Wild West, and about a year after the arrival, in the frontier posts commanded by Colonel Godfrey Granger, of the Rebel Ranger, Texas Jack.

Felix Finn, the driver of the Overland coach from Trail End City to Fort Rest, felt his importance to an alarming extent, for he had orders to prepare to take as passenger from the fort, and back again, no less a personage than the commandant of the military district, Colonel Godfrey Granger.

The colonel had decided to go to Fort Protection on an inspecting tour, and he willed to go by coach instead of on horseback, with a cavalry escort.

Then, too, the colonel wished to meet a person at Trail End City, whom he had business with, and had no desire to have seen at the fort.

For several reasons, best known to himself, Colonel Granger desired to have no escort, and without even an escort of an *aide-de-camp*, he started for Trail End City.

He went on from there to Fort Protection, and after a stay there of a few days, returned by coach to Trail End City.

For some reason Colonel Granger decided to remain a couple of days at the Wayside Hotel, in Trail End City, and the landlord, Pete Porter, who was also the stage-coach boss at that place, gave him the best room in the house, and was proud to have his company.

There was a stranger at the Wayside, who had come in from the East a couple of days before, and who asked to be presented to the colonel, stating that he had known him in the past.

Pete Porter readily consented to introduce him, and the two became quite intimate during the colonel's stay at Trail End City.

When the day came for the coach to start for Fort Rest again, Felix Finn, the driver, had as passengers the colonel and a stranger who had just come in from the East in the morning coach.

"Do you know that man, sir?" asked the colonel's new-found acquaintance at the Wayside, alluding to the stranger.

"I do not, do you?"

"I may be wrong, but he looks strangely like the man who robbed me when I came West to see you, six months ago, colonel."

"I hope he is not the man, for I do not wish to be robbed of the money you brought me, as it is too hard to get any extra allowance from my wife now, and from what you tell me it will be still more so."

"Yes, for she told me that she would not, under any circumstances, advance you another dollar beyond what she gave me for you this time and the time before, as she says that she will seek a divorce sooner than be robbed of her fortune to pay your debts."

"That was what she said?"

"It was, colonel."

"And the ten thousand you just brought me is all I need expect from her?"

"It is, colonel, except your income which she allows."

"And your fee and expenses take two thousand of that."

"You could not have gotten it without my aid."

"I hardly believe that I could; but you must think up some other scheme to get money from her if you want another large fee."

"Well, the two we tried, the one six months ago, and this last one, will do no good to try again, for your wife is a very determined lady, Colonel Granger, and can neither be bullied or frightened."

"Well, if I need more money in time, I must get it in some way, so try and think of a plan to accomplish it, and write me word, though I dare not meet you here next time, as I wish

no one to suspect that I have anything to hide."

"As you please, colonel; but there comes the coach from the northward."

"Yes, and I expect the paymaster upon it with a large sum of money to pay off at the three forts under my command, and I hope we will not meet a road-agent on the run."

"I hope not, colonel; but good-by."

The colonel parted then with his secret agent, and then entered Felix Finn's coach just as the northern stage drove up with a passenger for Fort Rest.

"It is the paymaster," muttered the colonel, as the passenger sprang out of the coach just arrived, and held tight to a leather satchel he carried.

"All ready!" called out Felix Finn, and the new arrival sprang in and took the back seat by the side of Colonel Granger, the stranger occupying the one in front.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE UNKNOWN PASSENGER.

THE unknown passenger was a man with heavy beard and large frame, dressed in black, and might be mistaken for an itinerant parson.

The paymaster upon entering saluted the colonel politely and bowed to the stranger, but the latter paid no attention to the courtesy.

The paymaster's bag was placed on the floor between his feet, and he entered into conversation with the colonel, who was unable to make out just who and what the strange passenger was.

Felix Finn felt his importance in having the colonel in his coach, and also the paymaster, for he knew him, and was very sure that he carried with him a large sum of money in that leathern satchel.

Who the third passenger was he did not know, but supposed that the colonel did, as he was going to Fort Rest, or Fort Famine, these being the two destinations of the coach.

As they rolled on their way and got further among the mountains, the stranger seemed to take great interest in looking out the window, all efforts to draw him into conversation being fruitless, as he appeared to be very deaf, and carried an ear-trumpet with him, a circumstance which caused the colonel and the paymaster to be very willing to allow him to remain silent.

Suddenly there came a loud voice ahead calling a halt, and Felix Finn obeyed with a suddenness that showed he was surprised and startled.

Before the colonel and paymaster could utter a word as to the cause, the strange passenger's hands flew up, each one held a revolver, and they covered the two soldiers.

The hands were as firm as a rock, the weapons were cocked, the eyes of the stranger glanced along the sights, and for the first time he spoke.

What he said was decidedly to the point:

"Colonel Granger and Paymaster Herbert, you are dead men if you make any resistance, for I am Captain Crimson, the road-agent, and you know my record, so beware!"

The colonel was a brave man, and Paymaster Herbert was no coward, while each officer had much at stake.

But they looked squarely into the muzzles of the revolvers, not two feet away, they saw that they were cocked, that the forefingers of the self-confessed outlaw was upon the triggers and they dared not make a move.

Then, too, they knew who Captain Crimson was, though both had believed him dead, or fled from the country.

Six months before he had been captured by Buffalo Bill, and was sentenced, without trial, by Colonel Granger to be hanged.

The very day appointed for his execution, when he was being led to the scene to die, he broke from his guard, killed one soldier, leaped upon an officer's horse and escaped.

He was fired upon and it was supposed that he had been fatally wounded, though as darkness was near at hand he escaped, and reached the river, where his horse was found, and all believed that he had fallen from the saddle and been drowned in the torrent.

Since then nothing had been heard of Captain Crimson or his men, and it was believed

that the road-agents had been driven from the Overland Trails.

Now the dreaded outlaw leader appeared before Colonel Granger and the paymaster, and held them at his mercy, while there was no doubt that the coach had been held up by his men.

Colonel Granger was fairly caught, for his sword-belt, with his revolvers in the holster, lay upon the seat in front of him, and the paymaster dared not move to draw his pistol from his belt.

Without, Felix Finn was evidently in trouble, for through the coach windows a man could be seen upon either side covering the driver with his rifle.

As all remained quiet within the coach, Felix Finn had an idea that the passengers had not awakened to the situation, so he called out:

"Pardon, colonel, but I'm held up outside here."

"And the colonel is held up within here, Felix Finn," came the startling reply of the stranger, who then gave a shrill whistle, when instantly a man appeared at the window on each side of the coach.

"Yes, captain," said one, while the other remarked:

"Your orders, captain."

"Paymaster Herbert, get out of this coach!" ordered the outlaw captain.

The paymaster hesitated, and sternly came the command:

"Do as I order you or die!"

The paymaster glanced at Colonel Granger, who said:

"You can do nothing, Herbert, so obey him."

Paymaster Herbert did so, and quick as a flash irons were slipped upon his wrists by the man on his side of the coach.

"Now, Colonel Granger, do you also get out."

"For what reason?"

"You will discover when you obey me."

"Refuse and you are a dead man!"

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE ROAD-AGENT'S REVENGE.

"Do you intend to put manacles upon me?" asked Colonel Granger, white with rage at the indignities he had to suffer.

"See here, colonel, you love life, you are young, hold high rank and are rich, so you do not wish to die, but die you shall if you do not at once obey me and get out of this coach."

Godfrey Granger looked straight into the eyes of the outlaw captain, and he saw that he meant just what he said.

So he calmly obeyed.

As his feet touched the ground the man standing there quickly slipped the manacles upon his wrists.

The colonel was driven to desperation, almost to the point of losing his life by resistance, but he saw that the outlaw captain had four men with him, that the paymaster and Felix Finn were helpless, and he heard the low warning:

"Beware!"

An oath came from his lips, but he submitted, and was manacled.

Instantly the outlaw captain sprang out of the coach and said:

"This is a good day's haul for me, Colonel Granger, and I wish I could be merciful, but it is not in my nature to show you mercy."

"I have dogged your paymaster for a week, and I know that he has with him some fifty thousand dollars to pay off the men at the forts, and that means a fortune for me."

"Now, with the paymaster's money and my revenge I will be content, will be willing to give up outlawry, and go away from the frontier; in fact I would hardly dare remain here after doing what I intend to do, for I would be hunted to death."

"And you shall be, for the robbery you committed this day," said Colonel Granger, savagely.

"My dear colonel, I am sure you do not yet see what my intention is."

"I see enough."

"No, you think that I only intend to rob the paymaster."

"You will get little from me," and the colonel spoke with anxiety of tone.

"I shall get my revenge."

"Revenge for what?"

"Revenge for your having had my brother hanged a year ago, and then you sentenced me to death by hanging."

"And I will yet see you strung up."

"No, you will not, for the sentence you imposed upon me, I shall now carry out upon you."

"In God's name what do you mean?" cried Paymaster Herbert, excitedly.

"Just what I say, sir, that Colonel Godfrey Granger having sentenced me to be hanged, I shall now condemn him to death, though, as he is a soldier with a gallant record, I shall mitigate the sentence and let him die by the bullet instead of at the end of a rope, a mercy he never would have shown me."

"Do you mean that you would dare put me to death?" asked the colonel, hardly believing that he had heard the outlaw aright.

"It is just what I mean, sir, for I shall place you ten paces away, and I will myself send a bullet through your heart."

"Then I will rob the coach, and send Paymaster Herbert on with your body to the fort, that your soldiers may see what the revenge of Captain Crimson is."

"You will not dare carry out your threat," said Colonel Granger, and yet something in the man's face told him that he would do so.

The outlaw leader laughed and replied:

"You shall see, sir, and you have just five minutes to live."

As he spoke he took out a handsome gold watch and held it in his hand.

"See here, yer red-handed villain, does yer know what yer is going ter do?" called out Felix Finn, now joining in when he saw that matters did look bad for the colonel.

"I know perfectly well, Felix."

"If you dares to carry out your threat there will not be one of yer alive in twenty four hours, and I'll gamble high on it."

"I'll take all chances, Felix Finn, and do you not chip in this game, or I'll play a card you won't like," and the outlaw leader tapped his revolver significantly.

"I knows when I hain't invited, so I says no more," was Felix Finn's response, and he added:

"Lord, colonel, but I wishes I could save yer; but I can't, though I'll promise yer that I'll round ter see these gents strung up."

"You have but a couple of minutes more, colonel, so say your prayers if you know any."

"See here, man, I am no coward and would not beg for life if there was reason for me to die; but I do not wish to be shot down like a dog, and I'll buy my life from you, so name your price."

"No, Colonel Granger, you cannot buy your life from me, for I love my revenge more than I do your gold."

"You must die, so take your stand there, for I am to be your executioner."

CHAPTER LXIV.

NOT A SECOND TOO SOON.

BROUGHT face to face with death, Godfrey Granger proved his courage and nerve, for he did not flinch.

He saw that the outlaw leader was revengeful, and knew that he well deserved the name he had won, of Captain Crimson, from his merciless nature and red deeds.

Godfrey Granger recalled, too, the fact that he had had the outlaw's brother hanged, and also had sentenced him later to die the same death, from which only his daring escape had saved him.

Loving life as he did, a man with an evil heart, Colonel Granger was yet a true soldier and would die game.

He made up his mind to that, at least; still he longed to find some means of escape, and said:

"Your revenge may be sweet, Sir Outlaw, yet you can gain far more satisfaction by sparing my life for a price than killing me."

"You are mistaken; your death is what I shall insist upon. There were three brothers of us. One of those you ordered hanged, and sentenced me to the same fate. One brother is yet living. Were I to die by violence he would avenge me, for we three were bound by our brotherhood to protect each other and to kill the slayer of any one of us."

"No, you shall die, and if you are the brave man you have the reputation of being, you will die like a soldier, fearlessly."

"May I have time to write a few lines, which I will give to Paymaster Herbert to deliver?"

"Yes. How long do you wish?"

"I wish to write two short letters."

"Do so, then, at once!"

The colonel asked to have his hands freed of the manacles, but the outlaw refused, and with a pencil he hastily wrote two letters.

These he handed to the paymaster with the words:

"Send them as addressed, Mr. Herbert when you have placed them in envelopes."

"I will, sir."

"You will bear witness that I did not flinch from my fate?"

"I will, colonel, most gladly," and the voice of the paymaster trembled, while Felix Finn called out:

"And so will I, God bless you, colonel!"

Godfrey Granger then turned to the outlaw and said:

"I am ready, sir; so do your worst."

Captain Crimson stepped off ten paces, wheeled, drew his revolver and called out:

"Now face me, sir!"

Colonel Granger obeyed.

"Now I will have my revenge upon the murder of my poor brother," and the outlaw captain slowly raised his revolver until he brought it upon a level with Colonel Granger's heart, while his four men, Felix Finn from the coach box, and Paymaster Herbert, with the irons still upon his wrists, stood breathlessly gazing upon the intended execution.

The finger of the outlaw was almost pressing the trigger of his revolver, when suddenly, there came a rifle's sharp report, a whirling sound, a dull thud and a bullet entered the forehead of Captain Crimson.

"Now, men, follow me!" came in a voice of command, and into view around a bend in the road dashed a horseman, while the four robbers, their chief slain, dashed away in terror.

"Hold on, pard!" cried Felix Finn, and no longer under cover he brought down one of the outlaws with a shot just as the horseman dashed up and at long range with his revolver dropped another dead as he was flying for shelter among the rocks.

"Pard, you is a dandy! But, whar is yer men?" cried Felix Finn.

"I am alone," was the quiet response of the horseman as he glanced calmly about him.

Then, as he heard the clatter of hoofs in the timber he gave a touch of his spurs to his horse and was away, like a flash.

He had been gone but a couple of minutes when several shots were heard in quick succession; then all was silent.

"Quick, Finn, get the keys from this dead outlaw and unlock these manacles, for I must go to the aid of that noble fellow," cried Colonel Granger.

The driver hastened to obey and searched for the keys of the handcuffs; but in vain; they were not found.

"Who is the splendid fellow, Finn?" asked the colonel.

"I do not know, sir; never saw him before; but I'll go after him, for I hain't tied up as you and the paymaster is, colonel," and Felix Finn dashed away into the timber, in the direction in which the stranger had gone and they had heard the firing.

"Well, Herbert, this is a most remarkable adventure," the colonel remarked.

"It is, indeed, sir; but, thank Heaven that you escaped as you did."

"It was the closest call of my life, for the shot of that stranger fired off the revolver of the outlaw, and his bullet whistled by my ear."

"Yes, but for that man I would now be dead."

"And you never saw him before, sir?"

"Never, and I hope with all my heart no harm has befallen him," was Colonel Granger's earnest response.

CHAPTER LXV.

THE UNKNOWN.

"We have saved the Government money, colonel," exclaimed Paymaster Herbert, in a joyous tone.

"Yes, and eight thousand dollars of my own money, so we are really fortunate indeed."

"We are that, colonel. But, hark! Here comes Felix Finn, and I hope sincerely the stranger is with him and unharmed."

As the paymaster spoke there came into sight an odd looking party, for across the back of one of the horses lay the dead form of an outlaw, and upon another animal rode a wounded man, the one who had been brought down as he ran away from the scene.

Behind them walked another outlaw, a prisoner, with the lariat of the stranger about his neck, the latter riding close after his capture, revolver in hand.

Bringing up the rear was Felix Finn the driver. He was leading two horses that belonged to the outlaws.

"We've got 'em, colonel, though one of 'em got away," shouted Felix.

"Yes, they have a dead outlaw, a second one wounded, and a third a prisoner, and there were but four besides their leader, who lies there," the colonel observed, and he turned his gaze upon the stranger.

He beheld a man six feet in height, with broad, massive shoulders, an upright, splendid physique, and clothed in buckskin leggings, top-boots and a Mexican jacket and sash, while he also wore an embroidered sombrero, in which shone a gold star.

His horse was a grand-looking animal, and his trappings, saddle, bridle and outfit, all Mexican. A long lariat was fast at one end to his saddle-horn while the other end was about the prisoner's neck.

The trappings of the stranger showed that he was fitted out for a long journey, for he had a roll of blankets and a camping equipage.

His face was darkly bronzed, from long exposure in a southern latitude, and his face was bearded, the brown, silken beard falling far down upon his broad breast, while his hair in waving masses hung down almost to the Mexican sash about his waist.

From his saddle cantel hung a repeating rifle and in his belt were a couple of revolvers and a long-bladed bowie-knife.

As he halted he said politely, giving the colonel a military salute:

"I am sorry to report, sir, that one of the outlaws escaped, as the driver tells me that with the leader, who was a passenger in the coach, there were five."

"Two of them are dead, two wounded and they need attention as soon as it can be given them, while the leader and this other dead man account for the party of five."

The voice was low and perfectly unmoved by the exciting scenes through which he had just passed and he looked just what he was—every inch a man.

The colonel at once advanced toward the stranger and holding up his manacled hands said:

"My dear, sir, I would like to grasp your honest hand, for you saved me from certain death at the hands of the outlaw, and your courage I never saw surpassed."

"You have also saved to the Government a very large sum of money, which Paymaster Herbert has with him to pay off the troops at the forts."

"As we are strangers to each other, permit me to say to you that I am Colonel Godfrey Granger, commandant of this military district, and I shall consider you my guest as long as you care to remain such."

The stranger bowed and replied:

"I am particularly glad to have rescued you, Colonel Granger, and I thank you for your kind hospitality extended to me; but I was on my way to the forts to see if I could secure a position there as a scout, for, as a Texas scout, I have had considerable experience in border life."

"You shall at once have a position, sir, as a special scout, for I know that Buffalo Bill needs just such men as you have proven yourself to be. What is your name, may I ask?"

"Dick Dashwood, sir; but let me suggest that I do all I can for these wounded outlaws, and that you then push as rapidly on as possible to the fort."

The colonel was more than willing to accept this advice, and when the stranger had dressed the wounds, as well as he could, of the wounded outlaws, they were hustled into

the coach, the bodies of the dead men thrown on top, and while the two officers mounted with the driver, Dick Dashwood, the rescuer, followed on behind, leading the captured horses.

Urged to do his best, Felix Finn willingly obeyed, and the coach rattled along at a great rate for the rest of the journey to Fort Rest.

CHAPTER LXVI.

THE DRIVER'S STORY.

As he drove along Felix Finn entertained the colonel and Paymaster Herbert with a recital of how he found the stranger and the outlaws.

"Yer see, colonel, I fu'st come upon the pilgrim ther stranger had dropped at long range, and he were down with a bullet in his leg, and were glad ter call out thet he surrendered."

"He had tumbled off his horse, yer see."

"Waal, I seen he were not dangerous, so I jist jumped on toposide o' his critter and rid on arter ther t'others."

"I seen at a glance thet thar was nothin' fer me ter do, fer thar were the stranger seated serene like on his horse, and he had his lariat around ther neck o' a outlaw."

"Yer see he had jist lassoed him on ther run, and yanked him out o' ther saddle."

"He wasn't hurted much, but he were bruised a bit and mad as a settin' hen."

"Pard, jist git ther hosses," he calls out ter me, and so I collected ther critters, of which there was four, one of 'em hitched, and three as were loose, which last belonged to ther wounded outlaw and a dead one as lay near by, fer ther stranger had got in his beautiful work on one of 'em."

"The one critter as was hitched belonged to ther chief, and had been led thar by t'others."

"Ther strange pard then said as how we'd freight ther dead outlaw back to ther coach on a horse, and give the wounded outlaw a free ticket in the saddle also, seeing as his leg was in bad shape; but ther other one hed ter walk, and he went along with a rope about his neck, too."

"I helped, as yer seen, but thar was nothin' fer me ter do, as yer now knows, colonel, fer ther stranger had did ther work up prime, and if he hain't a dandy I'm off ther trail o' truth, and he reminds me o' ther way Buffalo Bill attends ter business when it has ter be did, don't yer see?"

"Yes, he is not unlike Buffalo Bill, and has begun his frontier work by making a record for himself."

"I believe, if he sought it, the Government would give him a lieutenantancy in the army."

"I'll speak to him about it, Herbert, and urge his claim."

"Yes, sir, and he deserves it, while he appears to be a gentleman."

"Yes, some Texan who doubtless served in the Confederate Army and is in reduced circumstances now."

"I dislike to be under obligations to any man, but somehow he did not seem to make us feel the debt of gratitude we owe him."

"No, sir, and a debt of gratitude I can never repay or forget," the paymaster said, while the driver chimed in with:

"Now I obsarved thet same thing, colonel, thet he took it all as a matter of course, and didn't seem ter think he'd done anything."

"How did he happen to be upon the scene?" asked the paymaster.

"He told me, as he was binding up the wounds of those outlaws, and which, by the way, he did with the skill of a surgeon, that he saw the trail of the outlaws, followed it and found that they halted near the stage trail, which he saw in the distance."

"They had a led horse and hitched all of their animals a couple of hundred yards off the trail."

"Feeling that they meant mischief, he rode around to head off whoever they were lying in ambush fer, but got into the trail after the coach had passed, so followed it."

"He came upon the scene just as I was writing those letters, which I'll get you to return to me now, Herbert, and a glance showed him what was the matter."

"He knew the force of the outlaws, but decided to attack, and seeing that I was to be murdered, fired at long range and then

charged upon the scene, and I'll say again it was one of the bravest deeds I ever knew of."

"It was, indeed, sir," answered the paymaster, as he handed over the two letters to the colonel.

"Do you see how he rides, sir?" asked Felix Finn.

"Splendidly."

"You bet he does, colonel."

"All Texans ride well; but what a sensation this will create at the fort, Herbert, for us to go in with our hands manacled?"

"It will, indeed, sir."

"And the dead and live freight I carries, too."

"But, colonel?"

"Yes, Finn."

"Hain't thar money on ther head o' Captain Crimson?"

"You are right, for there was a reward offered for him by the Overland Company of five thousand dollars."

"Then the stranger gits it, I'm thinking."

"He does, indeed, and I'll see that it is paid to him at once, for that may enable him to refuse to take the position as a scout, though I should hate to lose him as such."

CHAPTER LXVII.

THE GUEST OF HONOR.

It did, indeed, create a sensation at Fort Rest, when Felix Finn's coach rolled up to headquarters, with Colonel Granger and Paymaster Herbert in irons, two dead outlaws on the top of the stage, and a couple of wounded ones in the inside, while a stranger followed, leading several horses that were saddled and bridled, but riderless.

There was a scene of excitement at once, and all eyes turned upon the distinguished looking stranger, who they felt had something to do with the strange situation of affairs.

The colonel and the paymaster hastily entered headquarters, accompanied by the stranger, while Buffalo Bill was sent for, and also the armorer, to remove the manacles from the wrists of the two officers.

Word was returned that Buffalo Bill was away, having been sent to Fort Famine by the officer commanding in the absence of Colonel Granger, and then Dick Dashwood was invited to remain at headquarters as a guest.

This, however, he refused and he was assigned to quarters near Buffalo Bill and at once departed to make himself comfortable there.

After some trouble the armorer removed the manacles from Colonel Granger and Paymaster Herbert, and the latter departed for the quarters he always occupied when at the fort, and he was not long in being surrounded by the officers of the fort who wished to learn just what had happened.

He quickly told them, and he bestowed the greatest praise upon Dick Dashwood the gallant rescuer.

"Who is he, Herbert?" a score of voices asked, and the reply was:

"He gave his name as Dick Dashwood and said that he had been a scout in Texas."

"That is all we know of him, but the colonel thinks he is some Southerner who has been reduced in circumstances by the war, and being in the Confederate Army, has gone to scouting for a living."

"He looks the soldier, certainly," said one.

"Every inch he does."

"Yes, and he is as handsome as an Apollo."

"Formed like a Hercules."

"Well, gentlemen, after the service he has rendered our colonel, the proper thing for us to do, we who are bachelors, is to invite him to our club to dinner to-night."

"What do you say?"

This proposition was received with a shout and three officers were appointed to call upon the stranger at his quarters and invite him to dine at the club that night at eight.

They at once went over to the neat little cabin which had been given the stranger, and found that he had already made himself at home, as though he was used to taking matters as they came.

He had spread his blankets upon his cot, hung up his clothes taken from his saddle-

bags, gotten his cooking utensils out upon the hearth, and was cleaning his weapons when the officers arrived.

He received them courteously, when they introduced themselves, and thanking them said:

"I appreciate your kindness, gentlemen, for the honor done me; but I am here as a scout, and therefore must refuse to accept your invitation."

"Bah! Buffalo Bill often dines with us, as does Texas Jack also, when he is here from Fort Famine, and you are not yet enlisted for duty, if you really wish to put it upon that plea."

"No, you must come," said the spokesman, and the others urging also, Dick Dashwood said:

"Gentlemen, I will accept with pleasure your kind invitation in the same frank spirit that it is given."

And so that night the stranger was the honored guest of the Bachelors' Club, while all the married officers of the fort were invited to meet him.

He went in his border dress, and many an admiring glance was cast upon him, while it was at once discovered that, whatever his calling, however rough the life he may have led, he was a gentleman, refined and courtly.

He talked well, told a good story, and lent his help to the entertainment by showing them some fancy shots in the shooting gallery of the club, and how expert one could become in throwing a lasso.

He would have retired early had he been allowed; but as it was he went to his quarters long after midnight, and had the satisfaction of knowing that he had been unanimously made an honorary member of the Bachelors' Club.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THE REFUSAL.

THE next morning an orderly came to the quarters of Dick Dashwood with the compliments of Colonel Granger, who sent word that he would expect to see the scout at dinner that day, and then they would discuss certain affairs which he desired to talk with him about.

"The colonel's invitation, orderly, is like a king's request, and hence I accept."

"Please say to Colonel Granger that I thank him for the honor done me and will accept," said Dick Dashwood.

At the designated hour Dick Dashwood appeared at headquarters, dressed, as at the club dinner, in his border costume.

During the day Paymaster Herbert and many officers had called to pay him their respects, so that he had found himself surely a hero and an honored one at Fort Rest.

Colonel Granger greeted him cordially and told him that he was the only guest that day, as he wished to talk with him alone.

"After dinner however, I expect some visitors who are anxious to meet you, Mr. Dashwood, so you see true courage is appreciated out here in the Wild West."

Dick Dashwood bowed, and the colonel went on to say:

"Now I am going to make a change in the scouting league, for Texas Jack is to go up to Fort Protection and I will name you as chief of scouts at Fort Famine in his place, and then you will have some twenty buckskin heroes under you."

The scout bowed and Colonel Granger continued:

"Buffalo Bill is of course chief of scouts for my military district, embracing the three forts, this one being headquarters, and you will serve under his orders, but be in the command of Colonel Armes, an officer of ability and distinction."

Again the scout responded with a bow, after which he said:

"Yes, Colonel Granger, I have heard of Colonel Armes as a most able soldier and gallant man."

"He is both; but may I ask if you were a Confederate soldier in the late war?"

"I was, sir."

"To what command were you attached?"

"To Forrest's cavalry, sir."

"Ah! then you saw service in Tennessee?"

"I did, sir."

"Well, I honor all good soldiers of the

South, and am glad to have you now in my command, for I am sure that you have seen considerable service."

"Yes, sir, I have," was the modest response.

"Now, let me say to you, Mr. Dashwood, that there is a reward for the body, dead or alive, of Captain Crimson, the outlaw, and the amount is five thousand dollars."

"It is strange that he was not taken, or killed, long ago, sir, with such a price on his head."

"He was as cunning as a fox, and when we had him a prisoner six months ago, he made his escape the very day I had set for his execution; but you are entitled to the reward, and I will so notify the Overland Stage Company, and have it forwarded to me here for you."

"Pardon me, Colonel Granger, but I must decline to accept the reward."

"Decline to accept it?" asked the colonel, in amazement.

"Yes, sir."

"And why, may I ask?"

"I am not one, sir, to take a reward upon a human life, no matter what the man may have been upon whom the price is set."

"But, sir, consider that it is a most generous sum, five thousand dollars, and that you are in every way entitled to it, as Driver Felix Finn will be most happy to vouch for."

"Then, sir, as the Overland drivers have often been sufferers, let the company set the sum aside for those who may be wounded and out of work, for I will not touch a dollar of it."

"You are firm in this refusal?"

"Perfectly, sir."

"Remember, your pay as a captain of scouts will only be ninety dollars a month and rations."

"It will be ample for my needs, sir, as I am neither a gambler or dissipated man."

"You are a very remarkable man, Dashwood," said Godfrey Granger, and he meant it, for the stranger was an enigma he could not solve.

For a man to refuse five thousand dollars he had justly earned, was an unheard of thing to Colonel Granger.

But Dick Dashwood was firm in his refusal, and at last said:

"I shall leave for Fort Famine in the morning, sir, to assume my duties."

"Yes, I will give you the necessary orders and you can relieve Texas Jack, who will report at once at Fort Protection."

"Now, Dashwood, I must make a lion of you, as the ladies of the fort have demanded it and I have to obey."

"Come into the parlors and meet those who have come to be introduced."

There was no retreat for Dick Dashwood and he obeyed; but at dawn he was off on his ride to Fort Famine, carrying with him the horses of the outlaws, for those were turned over to him as his property, and good animals they were.

CHAPTER LXIX.

UNDER ORDERS.

"THERE is something in that man's face I do not like, a look I cannot fathom."

"Somewhere I have met him before, yet for the life of me I cannot recall the time or place, nor the circumstances."

"I believe that he is other than he says he is."

So mused Colonel Godfrey Granger to himself after the scout had left his quarters that night.

Those who had sought to meet him were the wives and daughters of the officers, for they had heard of his wonderful courage and daring rescue, and the officers had talked of nothing else except Dick Dashwood the scout.

So a request had been made to the colonel to allow them to come to headquarters and meet the hero, after the dinner was over.

The colonel had granted the request, and he was not long in discovering that all were charmed with the man whom he could not fathom.

When the day dawned the following morning the strange scout rode out of the fort on his way to Fort Famine.

Behind him trotted the four horses captured from the outlaws, so that he was well supplied in that way.

He took the stage trail for Fort Famine, and not many miles out met Felix Finn on his return run to Trail End City.

Felix Finn had an empty coach and drew up for a talk; but had the stage been crowded he would have done the same.

He had spread the news at Fort Famine of the heroic rescue, and no one there seemed to know who the strange scout could be.

"Buffalo Bill had taken a short scout up the Indian way from Famine, so I did not see him, but I guesses you will, pard; but now about that money."

"What money?"

"Ther reward."

"I have refused it."

"Yer hev what?"

"Refused it."

"See here, pard, is yer in good health?"

"Oh yes."

"And yer refuses ter take the reward?"

"I have, and the colonel knows what to do with it, if the Stage Company desires to give it."

"Waal, thet jist upsets me entire; but what may be your motive in doing so?"

"Simply that I would not touch a dollar of blood-money."

"Waal, I guesses you knows best," and Felix Finn was evidently greatly surprised that the stranger refused, the Overland Company's reward for the body, dead or alive, of Captain Crimson.

"See here, pard, that outlaw has got a brother, and they was pledged to avenge each other, so jist keep yer eye open fer him."

"I will do so, thank you."

"And let me tell yer thet this be a very onsart'in trail ter travel, for thar has been red deeds done along it, and yer must keep a eye on a ambush along it, see?"

"I'll try and not be caught asleep, Pard Finn; but I must be going now," and the scout rode on his way once more, while Felix Finn gazed after him with undisguised admiration.

The trail led around a mountain spur, which commanded a most extensive view of the valley between the mountains, looking for many miles over a vast expanse of country.

Halting upon the spur, charmed with the magnificent view, he was gazing with rapt admiration when his eyes fell upon a horseman far away in the valley and coming toward him.

From the spot where he stood he knew that he could not be seen, that he was shielded from view by the fringe of trees along the border of the trail.

His horses were some distance off, cropping the grass near a spring, for he had halted for his noonday meal.

Going to his saddle he got his field-glass and turned it upon the distant horseman.

The glass was a powerful one and he had a good view of the man for he said aloud:

"If I am not mistaken that horseman is Buffalo Bill coming this way."

As he swept his glass along the trail the horseman would have to follow, to reach the Overland Trail, he suddenly started, and an exclamation of surprise broke from his lips.

His glass was fixed upon a timber motte in the valley, grown about a mass of bowlders, and around which the trail ran.

There, in among the rocks he saw several horses, and, as he continued to search the little clump of timber carefully, his glass at last fell upon a bowlder behind which crouched three men.

That they had seen the coming horseman, and were lying in wait for him, there was no doubt in the mind of Dick Dashwood.

The horseman was yet some three miles from the spot of ambush, and it was all of that distance from the mountain spur where he stood to the timber where the men were in hiding.

CHAPTER LXX.

A TRIO OF RED-SKINS.

"THAT man must not ride into that ambush, if I can warn him, for, though I cannot see very clearly, I believe those are Indians in hiding."

So said Dick Dashwood, and he at once decided to act.

He went back to where his horses were, and at once saddled the animal he knew

was most fleet of foot, his own splendid beast.

The others he staked out where they were, and leaving his traps in hiding, went rapidly back down the trail to the valley.

The ground was soft there, so gave back no sound, and he sent his horse flying along.

His intention was to reach the scene ahead of the single horseman.

If those in ambush were scouts on the watch for a foe, then they could up and at the horseman, and catch him.

If they were red-skins, and the white man was warned in time, his life would be saved.

So on rode the scout at a rapid pace, picking his ground as well as he could, so as not to let the clatter of his horse's hoofs be heard.

At last he came to a rise, and in full view of the clump of timber.

There was the trail winding around it, and almost in rifle-range beyond came the horseman, all unconscious of danger.

One glance through his glass and a name broke from his lips.

And there in the timber, hiding among the rocks, though not visible, were those in ambush.

The horses were in sight from where he halted, but the men were not.

Of course they were foes, as Buffalo Bill was the game they were waiting for.

There was one way to warn Buffalo Bill, and the same thing would make those lying in wait show themselves.

That was to fire a shot at about the spot where they were.

They would be alarmed, and if they ran for their horses he would see just what they were.

Of course it would put three foes upon him, but then was not Buffalo Bill within call?

The foes, if foes they were, would have the advantage of position, but then with Buffalo Bill on one side, and he on the other, they would be forced out, or have to fight.

He could not see the saddles of the horses, or he could have told whether their riders were red skins or not.

Having decided upon his course of action, Dick Dashwood fired a shot from his rifle, and then dashed into view.

The shot was a deadly one, though at random, for up from among the rocks sprung three Indians, warriors, one to fall quickly back again, the two others to make a rush for their ponies.

Instantly the wild Rebel yell rung out over the valley, and the scout spurred out of his retreat.

At the shot Buffalo Bill had halted and slung his rifle round for use.

As he saw the horseman dash out from cover he recognized that he was a white man and came forward.

He had heard the Rebel yell and recognized it as one he had often heard during the war, and as the war-cry of Texas Jack.

The one he saw was not Texas Jack, so who was he?

Why had the shot been fired?

If a foe, he was ready to meet him.

So Buffalo Bill rode rapidly forward, until he heard the words:

"Flank that timber and aid me to drive out two red-skins that are there!"

In a moment the chief of scouts knew why the shot had been fired.

He could not see the red-skins, but he wheeled his horse from the trail and obeyed what had been a command.

As he did so a bullet from the timber cut up the dirt not far from him, and another shot was evidently sent in the direction of the stranger.

Then he heard the wild war-cry of the stranger and another shot came from his rifle, and an Indian horseman dashed out of the timber in rapid flight.

A quick aim at long range and Buffalo Bill tumbled the warrior from his saddle, as he heard:

"Dismount and scout into the timber now as I will; but be cautious, for I do not believe I killed that fellow I shot at."

Buffalo Bill hastily staked out his horse and obeyed.

As he scouted from rock to rock he suddenly caught sight of a horse and rider again making a dash for liberty.

Up went his rifle to his shoulder, the re-

port followed and the Indian fell from his saddle.

A moment after the King of the Border was face to face with the man who had kept him from riding into an ambush, which would have meant his death.

CHAPTER LXXI.

A FANCIED RESEMBLANCE.

THE chief of scouts regarded the stranger with surprise, for he beheld one who was unknown to him.

But he stepped quickly forward and said:

"I owe you my life, pard, and I need not say that I am most grateful, and that you will ever find a friend in Buffalo Bill."

"And you are Buffalo Bill?"

"So I am called here on the border."

"I have heard of you often, and I was hoping to meet you, for I am just from Fort Rest, and am going to Fort Famine to report for duty."

"Here are my orders, sir."

Buffalo Bill took the paper and glancing over it said quickly:

"I met a scout from the fort last night, and he told me of your splendid rescue of the colonel, for Felix Finn the Overland driver had told him about it."

"I congratulate you, Mr. Dashwood, for each I see is your name here."

"Thank you, Captain Cody; but are you o return now to Fort Rest?"

"I shall accompany you to Famine and return with Texas Jack."

"I had scouted off toward the mountains, as I saw some signal fires in the mountains and wished to see what they meant."

"How was it you discovered those Indians in ambush, for I did not believe there was a hostile red-skin this side of the range, and would have ridden right upon them, but for you."

"I halted on the spur for dinner, and was enjoying the scenery from there, when, by accident I saw you."

"Turning my glass upon you, I beheld the Indians' horses, and a search revealed them lying in wait."

"I at once decided to come here with all haste, and, to make, whoever they were, show themselves, and to warn you, I fired a shot."

"It was a random shot, but it found a target, and as you got the other two we have the trio now."

"One of my shots brought down an Indian pony, but his rider quickly mounted another, and he was the last one you brought down."

"We will look them over now, and of course must bury them."

"Let me just catch those two Indian ponies," and Buffalo Bill rode off after them while Dick Dashwood went on a search through the timber.

The ponies were soon caught, the Indian braves were buried, and the two men so strangely met rode back to the mountain spur to camp for the night, and go on to Fort Famine the following morning, for it was getting late.

Reaching the spur they went into camp, and seated around a cheerful camp-fire they talked together as though they had been old friends.

Bright and early the next morning they started for Fort Famine, and when Buffalo Bill was seen coming in with a stranger, and leading half a dozen horses, quite a gathering assembled to greet them.

Among the first to greet the chief of scouts was Texas Jack, who was at once presented to Dick Dashwood, and told of his being relieved of duty at Fort Famine by Colonel Granger, and sent to Fort Protection to assume command of the scouts there.

"I hope I do not cause you any regret, or inconvenience, Mr. Omohundro, by relieving you of duty here, for I would go to Fort Protection just as willingly," said Dick Dashwood.

"No, indeed, sir, for I like Fort Protection equally as well, though I do not know the commandant so well as I do Colonel Armes, whom you will find a fine officer and a good friend."

"And you will find Major Dean the same, Jack," said Buffalo Bill, and then he added:

"Now, come, Mr. Dashwood, and I will

present you to Colonel Armes, and my word for it you will get along splendidly together, for if there is anything he does admire it is pluck and go in a man."

The news had already gone to Colonel Armes of how Colonel Granger had been rescued, for he had held a long conversation with Felix Finn, and an officer had reported to him how Buffalo Bill had been kept out of an ambush by this same scout, who was coming to report for duty at Fort Famine.

So Colonel Armes was quite anxious to see the stranger, and when he entered with Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack he fixed his piercing eyes upon him as though he would look into his very soul.

Buffalo Bill presented Dick Dashwood in a few well-chosen words, and the colonel offered his hand at once and said:

"Your deeds, sir, would command a welcome for you under any circumstances, Mr. Dashwood, and I am glad to have you under my command, though sorry to lose Texas Jack of course; but what will be my loss Major Dean will find his gain."

"Buffalo Bill, I congratulate you upon your escape, and also that you have here at Fort Famine Mr. Dashwood as captain of scouts, so thank Colonel Granger for me for sending him here."

Then he turned to the scout again and continued:

"Mr. Dashwood, we have surely met before, sir; when and where was it?"

"I can give you no assistance, Colonel Armes, in finding out, sir."

"Then I am mistaken; but your face, though not familiar, I admit, haunts me like a memory of the past."

"And I, Colonel Armes, have said the same to Mr. Dashwood, and it must be also a resemblance to some one whom I cannot recall," said Buffalo Bill.

Dick Dashwood made no reply to this, but said:

"I am ready to report for duty at once, Colonel Armes."

"You are prompt; but Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack will initiate you into your duties here, Mr. Dashwood, and introduce you to your men, twenty in number."

And the next morning when Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack rode away from the fort, Dick Dashwood went on duty there.

CHAPTER LXXII.

A DEATH-WOUND.

A YEAR passed away upon the border, and it had been an eventful one, for there had been a number of hard fights with the Indians, raids upon the red-skins' villages, settlements saved from ruin and death, and trouble with Overland road-agents, who from time to time beld up the coaches, and often killed as well as robbed the drivers and passengers.

Through all these scenes Dick Dashwood had held a conspicuous part.

He had brought in most valuable information of the Indians preparing for the war-path, had fought most valiantly in every battle, had several times saved the coaches from robbery and won the admiration and respect of his superior officers.

Colonels Granger and Armes, and Major Dean were all loud in his praise, and with Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack, he was one of the heroes of the plains.

A man who kept to himself, yet was ever courteous and kind to those under his command, and respectful to his superiors, he was looked upon as a man with a history.

Though a Texan, Texas Jack had never heard of him, and yet he knew the State and people there well.

To Buffalo Bill he was the same unfathomable mystery that he was to others.

He was never known to receive a letter or write one, and he shunned all social intercourse, though beyond all doubt reared in refinement.

His cabin quarters were an example of neatness, and sketches and paintings were upon the walls, his own work.

He had been given the freedom of the fort library, and the books he read showed a mind of superior intelligence and cultivation.

A better scout, Buffalo Bill said, was not to be found upon the border, and yet why

such a man as he was could content himself with such a life, no one could understand.

He was wont to read medicine and law, as well as books of history, travel and science, and the surgeon of the fort said that he was no mean doctor.

Colonel Granger had made a request that he be appointed a second lieutenant in the army, for gallant services rendered, and conspicuous courage, and Colonel Armes and Major Dean, with all the other officers at the three forts, had indorsed the recommendation.

But when he was told that it was to be favorably acted upon, he at once put a stop to the movement in his behalf by stating that he would not, under any circumstances, accept the honor.

Why he refused, he gave no reasons, but his refusal was decided, and all felt that he meant it.

One day, when he had been at Fort Famine a year, he had gone to Trail End City on a special mission to carry important papers through, which were not to be trusted to the coach, as the road-agents had been giving a great deal of trouble of late.

Arriving at Trail End City, he delivered his papers to the out-going coach from there eastward, and started upon his return the next morning, going *via* Fort Rest.

The coach had started a couple of hours ahead of him, for Fort Rest and Fort Famine, and being mounted, he traveled more rapidly than it did.

Suddenly, upon the very spot where he had rescued Colonel Granger and the paymaster, he came upon the coach, halted upon the trail.

There stood the horses, and dead by the coach lay the driver, a bullet in his brain.

Near him was a passenger, the coach door was open, and had been robbed.

As he bent over the passenger he heard a low moan, the eyes opened and met his, while the appeal came faintly:

"Don't kill me!"

"My dear fellow, I am no murderer or robber, but a scout from the fort, and I just came upon this sad scene."

"A scout from the fort?" asked the man, quickly.

"Yes, so let me see what I can do for you."

"Where are you wounded?"

"Here, in the side, and save me for the love of God, save me, for I am not fit to die."

"I will do all in my power for you," and the scout tenderly examined the wound, while the man said:

"We were fired upon by road-agents, and then robbed; but they did not get some important papers I have for Colonel Granger."

"Are you an officer?"

"No."

"A courier?"

"No, I am a friend of Colonel Granger, a particular friend, and it is most important for me to see him."

"The fort is thirty miles from here, and you can hardly stand the ride, for duty compels me to tell you, my poor friend, that your wound is fatal!"

"A death-wound?" gasped the man.

"Yes."

"My God! is there no help for me?"

"I am sorry to say that I have no hope to give you."

"Oh, Heaven! have mercy!"

"So be it, my friend; but let me make you as comfortable as I can, and I will stay by you to the last."

"Thank you, oh, thank you!"

"But, who are you?"

"A scout."

"Your name?"

"Dick Dashwood."

"Dick Dashwood?" and the wounded man started visibly.

"Yea."

"How strange, for I had an uncle by that name."

"An uncle?"

"Yes."

"And so did I."

"What is your name?"

"He was my mother's brother, Richard Dashwood was his name and mine is Varney Beal."

"Varney Beal, I know you now."

"I remember that you ran away as a boy

from your home in the South, and it was said that you went to the bad, and that your evil conduct had broken your mother's heart."

"Yes, I know you now Varney, for you are my cousin, and Heaven knows I pity you."

The scout spoke most impressively and the man said faintly:

"Yes, I was all that was bad, and I am still."

"But you said that my wound was fatal, that I am dying, so I must plead for forgiveness for the past, ay, and I will make an atonement which you can help me carry out."

"You will, I know you will, for I read that in your face, for now I know you, yes, I recall you now."

"I will do all in my power for you, Varney, yes and help you to atone for any wrong you have done."

"If you have aught to tell me, if you wish me to aid you, tell me what you would have me do, for I am ready and willing."

"I will tell you all, just how sinful I have been, for I have a confession to make, and I will die at peace then with Heaven, but not with the sins weighing me down and unconfessed."

"How long have I to live?"

"You are suffering from an internal hemorrhage, and may live two hours, perhaps not so long, Varney."

"Then let me hurry with my confession, for I feel myself growing weaker."

"There, that drink of water from your canteen revives me."

"Now listen."

He talked in a low tone, and with evident effort and pain; but every word he uttered was heard by Dick Dashwood.

At last the voice sunk so low it could not be heard, there was a quick grasp of the hand, a shudder, and the man was dead.

But Dick Dashwood knew all that he had to tell, and had the papers which the robbers had failed to get.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

THE REPORT.

THERE was a surprise at Fort Rest when the coach came in with Dick Dashwood upon the box.

Fortunately for Felix Finn he had not been on duty that run, so the driver who took his place was the one to meet death.

The manner in which the scout brought the coach and six horses into the fort showed that he knew how to drive as well as to ride and shoot.

He at once went to headquarters to make his report to Colonel Granger.

The colonel listened to his story of how he found the coach, with the driver and a passenger dead, and that he had buried the bodies and then brought the stage on to the fort.

"Do you know who the passenger was, Dashwood?" asked Colonel Granger.

"The stage roll might tell, sir," was the evasive answer.

"I was expecting a friend to see me about this time, and I sincerely hope that he was not the unfortunate man."

"What about his luggage?"

"The road-agents, sir, had robbed the driver and his passenger before I came up, sir."

"Ah, yes."

"I will have to await the return of the coach in a week to know who he was."

"You will please report this affair to Colonel Armes, so that he may see if we cannot get rid of the road-agents."

"I will, sir."

"When do you start for Fort Famine, Dashwood?"

"To-morrow at daybreak, sir."

After a few more words together, Dick Dashwood took his leave and went to look up Buffalo Bill at his quarters.

"Ho, Dashwood, there has been trouble on the road, I hear?"

"Yes, Buffalo Bill, and I wish you would go back over the trail, and do me the favor to go on to Trail End City."

"Yes."

"See Pete Porter, and get him to change the name of his passenger, or no, it would be best for you to make a mistake in writing

the name of the dead man who was killed, for the colonel wants it."

"The colonel?"

"Yes, he said he was going to send a courier to Trail End City to find out who the passenger was, so if you tell him you wish to go and look over the trail, he will get you to secure the name."

"And you say I must change the name?"

"Yes."

"But why?"

"See here, Cody, you know me well enough to trust me, even if Colonel Granger is the one I wish just now to throw off the trail."

"The colonel asked me the name and I avoided answering, for I do not wish him to know it."

"Well?"

"I have reasons which I cannot now explain, but when you have returned from Trail End I wish you to come to Fort Famine, and then you shall know just what I have to tell you."

"The man's name is Varney Beal, so change it, say, to Harry Bell, and if it is discovered lay it to the bad writing on the manifest."

"I will trust you, Dashwood, in this, for you are not one to act without weighing just what you do."

"And I have weighed this matter most thoroughly, Cody."

"Now please see the colonel, so you will be the one to go to Trail End City, for there must be no mistake."

The chief of scouts at once went up to headquarters, and after a stay of half an hour returned and reported that he was to start for Trail End City at once.

This he did, wondering what it was that Dick Dashwood was up to, yet feeling perfect confidence in him.

He went on his way rapidly, going through to Trail End City that night, determined to do his scouting on his way back the following day.

At daybreak the next morning Dick Dashwood left for Fort Famine, and he made his report to Colonel Armes, as Colonel Granger had ordered.

Then he sought his quarters, took out a lot of papers and went carefully over them.

He took a note-book from his pocket, glanced carefully over its pages, and jotted down some items.

It was very late when he retired, and the next morning he arose and went off on a scout.

When he returned in the evening he found that Buffalo Bill had just arrived and was then with Colonel Armes.

Just as supper was ready Buffalo Bill came to Dick Dashwood's quarters and was cordially welcomed.

"Glad to see you, chief, and your coming shows that you have done some hard riding."

"I did not wait to see the grass grow upon my trail, Dashwood, as I felt that you had an important communication to make to me, after what you said at Fort Rest."

"I have several important communications to make, chief; but what about your trip to Trail End City?"

"I found the name as you said, and Pete Porter told me to copy it for the colonel."

"I wrote it as you said, and he made no comment."

"Had you given him the real name he would have done so."

"But did he look surprised?"

"Now it struck me that he looked pleased when he saw the name I gave him."

"Doubtless; but now I have this paper to offer to you as my chief."

"What!"

"Do you mean to say you offer your resignation?"

"About that, for I enlisted for one year, and the time is up to-morrow, so I wished to have an honorable discharge, you know, signed by you, Colonel Armes and Colonel Granger."

"But I shall not allow you to go."

"We will talk of that later, chief, but now please give me your autograph to that paper and then I shall get it also from Colonel Armes, while there is really no need of having Colonel Granger sign it."

"No, as you are a scout in my command, and Colonel Armes is sufficient."

"I am glad of that."

"Now after Colonel Armes signs it, I have something to say to him to-morrow which I wish you to hear."

"All right, Dashwood."

"You are playing some deep game, I am certain."

"You are right, chief, it is a deeper game than you think," was the reply, and the subject was dropped between them for the night.

After breakfast the next morning Dick Dashwood said:

"Come, now, Cody, and we will seek Colonel Armes, and you shall hear what I have to say, as soon as he puts his autograph to that paper," and the two started for headquarters.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

A PLOT UNEARTHED.

COLONEL ARMES received the two scouts in his pleasant way, for he admired and liked them both immensely.

"Well, Cody, what is up for to-day?" he asked.

"That is for Dashwood to say, colonel, for he has a paper he wishes you to approve, which is his resignation, though his time of enlistment one year is up to-day."

"You surely do not intend to leave us, Dashwood?" said Colonel Armes.

"Yes, sir, after awhile; but I desire to make known a secret to you, sir, and to have Buffalo Bill as a witness, but first I wish your approval of that paper, that I may not be considered an enlisted man or scout, when I say what I do."

Colonel Armes saw by the manner of the scout that he had something important to communicate, so he took the paper, read it over, and turning to his table wrote as follows:

"The resignation of scout captain, Dick Dashwood, is hereby approved, but with sincere regret that he deems it necessary to leave the service of the United States in which he has rendered far more than efficient service and time and again distinguished himself on the trail, in battle, and in the discharge of his dangerous and arduous duties."

"GEORGE A. ARMES,

"Colonel U. S. Army, commanding Fort Famine."

"I thank you most kindly, Colonel Armes, but you have been too complimentary, sir."

"Not more so than you deserved, and I was determined not to allow Cody to outdo me, for he says everything that is nice of you in his approval."

"You are both my very good friends, colonel."

"But now, sir, as I am no longer in service, I have a charge to make against Colonel Godfrey Granger, and I shall present it, sir, through you, as conduct unworthy of an officer, and which no man of honor would be guilty of."

"Whew!"

"Strong words these, Dashwood, against an officer of the army," said Colonel Armes, while Buffalo Bill sat simply too amazed to speak.

"I utter nothing that is untrue, sir, and which I cannot give the proof of."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir."

"But let me no longer hide under a false name."

"You, Cody and Colonel Granger, have all said that you thought that you had met me before, but could not place me."

"I do not wonder at that, when Texas Jack failed to recognize me, and he saw much more of me than you did."

"But some eight years, a wandering life, a full beard and long hair, upon a formerly beardless face, added to a different name, and no expectation of seeing me here, a scout, when once I commanded a brigade, have changed Cecil Seldon beyond all recognition."

"Cecil Seldon!" and Colonel Armes sprung forward and grasped the man before him with both hands, while Buffalo Bill cried:

"The secret is out, there is no doubt now."

As soon as the surprise was over, which followed this unmasking of the scout, Cecil Seldon continued in his deep voice and impressive manner:

"I became a wanderer after the war, which ended when I was in Europe."

"I served Juarez in Mexico until Maximilian's fall, and then started homeward."

"The day I arrived there I saved the life of Colonel Granger's little daughter Louise, and then only discovered that Mrs. Granger had bought Riverside Rest, and was living there with her father, aunt and child."

"I at once decided to leave my home, which I found a wreck, and I did so, leaving some faithful old negroes in charge."

"I went to Texas and joined the Rangers, and so saw service on the Rio Grande."

"Then word came to me that Colonel Granger was persecuting his wife for money."

"He had wronged me, had deceived her, and loving her, I determined to protect her."

"I came northward, and you know how I saved his life."

"The temptation was to let that outlaw kill him."

"But I resisted it, and saved him."

"I then took the place of scout to watch him."

"I found that he had an agent who twice had gone to Riverside Rest and obtained money from Mrs. Granger."

"Upon my return the other day from Trail End City, I came upon that agent of Colonel Granger, dying by the trailside."

"It was he whose name I got you to misrepresent, Buffalo Bill."

"His name was Varney Beal, and let me tell you that before he died he made a confession, and gave me papers which I wish to place before you."

"I found in Varney Beal an erring cousin of mine, and when he heard my name the secret came out, for I had an uncle who died long ago, Richard Dashwood, and he left me his name and fortune, the latter I never being able to discover."

"The name I did not take publicly, simply putting the Richard Dashwood in between the Cecil and Seldon, when I signed certain legal papers, so you see I have a right to it."

"Now this cousin, Varney Beal, Godfrey Granger also knew as a boy, and he met him in New York during the war."

"He knew his career, and found in him a willing tool, and so plotted with him to get money from Mrs. Granger."

"As further money was refused, Beal concocted a plot by letter with Godfrey Granger, which was to kidnap his child, and demand ransom for it amounting to a hundred thousand dollars, which, as Mrs. Granger is worth a million, and her father as much more, they knew would be paid."

"Nor is this all, for the villain Beal was to forge certain letters to him, compromising Mrs. Granger, have her meet him under pretense of exposing a plot to injure her, and then give those seeming proofs of her wrongdoing into the hands of her husband, who was to demand a secret divorce from her, which he knew, rather than be defamed publicly, for her child's sake, she would allow."

"Then was to follow the kidnapping scheme, and when Granger got the money, the ransom, he was to marry a rich California girl who visited at the post last year."

"These papers I have possession of, and I shall force Colonel Granger to resign from the army, for no such a man as he is should hold commission in the service of the United States."

"By Heaven, but you are right, General Seldon, and I will aid you in it."

"But, Colonel Armes, for the sake of the wife's good name, for the sake of the little girl, this must not be known to other than we three."

"You so wish it, general?"

"I make this a most earnest appeal to have it so, Colonel Armes."

"I wish not to be known other than I am, a scout, save to Colonel Granger."

"But I wish you and Buffalo Bill to go with me to see him, and I shall make the demand of his resignation, under pain of exposure."

"You can then make a similar demand, Colonel Armes, as a United States officer, and when he is forced out of the service I will be avenged, and his wife and child will be saved."

CHAPTER LXXV.

THE WINNING HAND.

It was with the most intense interest that Colonel Armes and Buffalo Bill heard the

story told by General Seldon, unearthing the villainy of a man who was living a double life, who was honored by all, and yet was plotting ruin upon those he should love and protect.

The colonel was deeply moved at the disgrace of a brother officer, but he intended to be governed by Cecil Seldon's entreaty and keep his sin a secret.

He also wished for the sake of the beautiful wife to save her and her child from the shame of an exposure, and the grand old man too, General Layton, whose fond heart would cruelly feel the blow.

For a long while the matter was talked over, and the papers held by Cecil Seldon were shown to Colonel Armes and Buffalo Bill, who saw for themselves that the proofs were most damning, and then the colonel and the ex-general arranged a plan of action to place before Colonel Granger the situation in which he found himself.

The next morning a party left Fort Famine for Fort Rest.

Buffalo Bill and Cecil Seldon, still acting as Dick Dashwood the scout, rode in advance, and Colonel Armes followed, while a cavalry escort of a dozen men brought up the rear.

Colonel Armes went to the quarters he always occupied, when visiting Fort Rest, for, as has been said, a coolness existed between the two officers.

But late in the evening, accompanied by General Seldon and Buffalo Bill, he went to headquarters.

"I desire to see you, colonel, upon a most important matter, so pray see to it that we are not disturbed and your orderly is not within hearing."

"As serious as that is it, Colonel Armes?"

"It is, sir."

The colonel left the room for a minute and upon his return said coldly:

"Well, sir?"

"I will allow Scout Dick Dashwood to be spokesman, and then I have something to say," said Colonel Armes.

Colonel Godfrey Granger turned to the scout and said:

"What is it, Dashwood, that all this mystery is about?"

"I will tell you, sir, in a few words; but first let me say that my time of enlistment ended yesterday, and my papers of discharge are signed by Colonel Armes and Chief Cody."

"You are surely not going to leave the service?"

"I am, sir; but as I am no longer under your command, I can speak freely, sir."

"Well, what else have you to say?"

"I wish to say, sir, that the passenger who was killed on the coach the other day was not *Harry Bell*, but *Varney Beal*."

"What!" and the colonel turned deadly pale.

"Yes, it was your secret agent, whom you met at Trail End City on two occasions, and who was not killed at once, as he was wounded and dying when I found him."

The face of Godfrey Granger was now deathly white, while he asked in a trembling voice:

"Did you have anything to say to him?"

"Yes, sir, much, and he had everything to say to me, for he made a full confession to me of your crimes, and his, toward your wife and child, and—"

"Hold!"

"How dare you speak to me thus? I will—"

"You will be calm, for we are here to keep your secret, for the honor of the service, from sympathy for your wife, not from any feeling for you, unless you force us to make it public by exposing you."

"I will—"

"Keep calm, sir, for if it becomes known that there is a scene here, you will find it very difficult to explain before a court-martial as to the proofs I hold of your guilt."

"If you are sensible and make no scene, then the mercy shown you will be that you are allowed to resign without your crimes being made known and can go your way."

"If you create a scene, then nothing under Heaven will save you from being branded as you deserve, a villain of the very worst character."

"My God! that I should listen to such language from you!"

"Take your choice, Colonel Granger, of exposure or secrecy in the matter."

"Take my advice, Granger, and resign at once, for you are in a very dangerous position."

"By resignation from the army, and going your way in life, you can save your dishonor from being known."

"Refuse, and I'll see that you are treated by all honorable men as you deserve," said Colonel Armes in a stern and decided way.

"Where are those proofs you speak of?" and Godfrey Granger grasped at a straw of hope like a drowning man.

"They are safe in my keeping, and no one save Buffalo Bill and your accuser here, has seen them."

"You will swear to this, Armes?"

"I will."

"And you demand that I resign?"

"Most emphatically and at once," was the decided reply.

"And you will keep my secret?"

"As long as you refrain from persecuting your wife, I will."

"And if you do persecute her, if you do seek to kidnap your child, Godfrey Granger, you shall have me to answer to, and bitter will be the answering."

"You will have to answer to me whom you wronged most cruelly, whose intended wife you stole by fraud, and whom you sought to have hanged as a spy to get rid of, when you found I was not dead."

"Do you know me now, Godfrey Granger? Do you know the man who now has his revenge for all of your wrongs upon him, in driving you from the army, in thwarting your scheme to wrong your wife and robber, and who will yet visit direst vengeance upon you if ever you raise hand to harm those two again?"

"You know me now, Godfrey Granger, once your friend, now your foe unto death, Cecil Seldon!"

Colonel Granger had risen as the wronged man faced him, but now realizing who it was that had thwarted his wicked schemes, who it was that he had to face, he sunk down in his chair again with a low moan, as though at last even he was crushed with despair.

"Now, Colonel Granger, write your resignation, and the day it is accepted leave this fort."

"Refuse to obey and expect the worse, for you shall no longer disgrace the uniform you wear than is absolutely necessary," and with this parting shot Colonel Armes left the room, followed by Buffalo Bill and Cecil Seldon.

Once the man arose as though to spring upon his accuser, but he thought better of it, as he met Cecil Seldon's eye, and stood in silence gazing after him.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

CONCLUSION.

GODFREY GRANGER took the only course left for him and resigned from the army, and, with the money he had in his possession at the time, and his pay up to the date of his resignation, left for parts unknown, no one seeming to understand his strange conduct in leaving the army, when it was thought he loved a military life so well.

Colonel Armes remained in the service for some years longer and was then retired on account of wounds received in battle, and today holds an honorable position in the capital of his country.

Buffalo Bill is still before the public, so the curtain cannot be let fall upon him, while Cecil Seldon, the soldier scout, returned to his long deserted home to spend the latter days of his life.

And there within sight lived the woman whose guilty husband was an outcast from home and kindred love, and who had been by him, so cruelly parted from the one love of her life.

THE END.

Beadle's Half-Dime Library.

BY BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG.

89 *Island Jim*; or, The Pet of the Family.
91 *The Captain of the Club*; or, The Rival Athletes.
101 *Jack Harkaway in New York*.

BY DAN DUNNING.

746 *Quiet Jack*, the Secret Service Spy.
767 *Mae and Jack*, the Invincibles; or, The Diabolical Three.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

Detective Dick Doom.

772 *Dick Doom's Death-Grip*; or, The Detective by Destiny.
777 *Dick Doom's Destiny*; or, The River Blackleg's Terror.
784 *Dick Doom*; or, The Sharps and Sharks of New York.
788 *Dick Doom in Boston*; or, A Man of Many Masks.
798 *Dick Doom in Chicago*.
798 *Dick Doom in the Wild West*.
803 *Dick Doom's Clean Sweep*; or, Five Links in a Clue.
808 *Dick Doom's Death Clue*.

Dashing Charlie.

749 *Dashing Charlie*; or, The Kentucky Tenderfoot's First Trail.
756 *Dashing Charlie's Destiny*; or, The Renegade's Captive.
760 *Dashing Charlie's Pawnee Pard*.
766 *Dashing Charlie*, the Rescuer.

Buck Taylor, (Buffalo Bill's Cowboy Chief.)

497 *Buck Taylor*, King of the Cowboys.
737 *Buck Taylor*, the Comanche's Captive.
743 *Buck Taylor's Boys*; or, The Red Riders of the Rio Grande.

Pawnee Bill.

560 *Pawnee Bill*, the Prairie Shadower.
713 *Pawnee Bill*; or, Carl, the Mad Cowboy.
719 *Pawnee Bill's Pledge*; or, The Cowboy's Doom.
725 *Pawnee Bill*; or, Daring Dick.

Detective Redfern.

692 *Redfern's Curious Case*; or, The Rival Sharps.
697 *Redfern at Devil's Ranch*; or, The Sharp from Texas.
702 *Redfern's High Hand*; or, Blue Jacket.
707 *Redfern's Last Trail*; or, The Red Sombrero Rangers.

Red Ralph.

668 *Red Ralph's Ruse*; or, The Buccaneer Midshipman.
674 *Red Ralph's Bold Game*; or, The Wizard Sailor.
679 *Red Ralph*, the Shadower, or, The Freebooter's Legacy.

Butterfly Billy, (Buffalo Bill's Pard.)

644 *Butterfly Billy's Disguise*.
650 *Butterfly Billy*, the Pony Express Rider.
656 *Butterfly Billy's Man Hunt*.
662 *Butterfly Billy's Bonanza*.

Kent, the Card King.

565 *Kent Kingdon*; or, The Owls of the Overland.
570 *Kent Kingdon's Shadower*; or, The Card Queen.
575 *Kent Kingdon's Duel*; or, The Surgeon Scout.
586 *Kent Kingdon's Doom*; or, The Buckskin Avenger.

Lalitte, the Pirate.

545 *Lalitte Run Down*; or, The Buccaneers of Barrataria.
550 *Lalitte's Legacy*; or, The Avenging Son.
555 *Lalitte's Confession*; or, The Creole Corsair.

The Buckskin Brothers.

520 *Buckskin Bill*, the Comanche Shadow.
525 *The Buckskin Brothers in Texas*.
530 *The Buckskin Bowers*; or, The Cowboy Pirates.
535 *The Buckskin Rovers*; or, The Prairie Fugitive.
540 *The Buckskin Pard's Quest*; or, Captain Ku-Klux.

The Royal Middy.

503 *The Royal Middy*; or, The Shark and the Sea Cat.
507 *The Royal Middy's Luck*; or, The Hunted Midshipman.
511 *The Royal Middy's Foe*.

Wizard Will.

450 *Wizard Will*; or, The Boy Ferret of New York.
454 *Wizard Will's Street Scouts*.
474 *Wizard Will's Pard*; or, Flora, the Flower Girl.
488 *Wizard Will's Last Case*; or, The Ferrets Afloat.

Duncan Dare.

429 *Duncan Dare*, the Boy Refugee.
433 *Duncan Dare's Plot*; or, A Cabin Boy's Luck.
437 *Duncan Dare's Prize*; or, The Sea Raider.
441 *Duncan Dare's Secret*; or, The Ocean Firefly.

The Young Conspirator.

402 *Isodor, the Young Conspirator*; or, The Fatal League.
407 *Isodor's Double Chase*; or, The Boy Insurgent.
412 *Isodor's War-Cloud Cruise*; or, The Wild Yachtsman.

Buffalo Bill.

216 *Blison Bill*, the Prince of the Plains.
222 *Blison Bill's Clue*; or, Grit, the Bravo Sport.

Dead Shot Dandy.

304 *Dead Shot Dandy's Dilemma*.
308 *Dead Shot Dandy's Double*; or, Keno Kit.
314 *Dead Shot Dandy's Defiance*; or, The Boy Bugler.
607 *Dead Shot Dandy's Chief*; or, The River Detective.

Merle Monte.

245 *Merle Monte's Leap for Life*.
250 *Merle Monte's Mutiny*; or, Brandt, the Buccaneer.
264 *Merle Monte's Treasure Island*.
269 *Merle Monte the Condemned*.
276 *Merle Monte's Cruise*; or, "The Gold Ship" Chase.
280 *Merle Monte's Fate*; or, The Pirate's Pride.
284 *Merle Monte's Pledge*; or, The Sea Marauder.

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